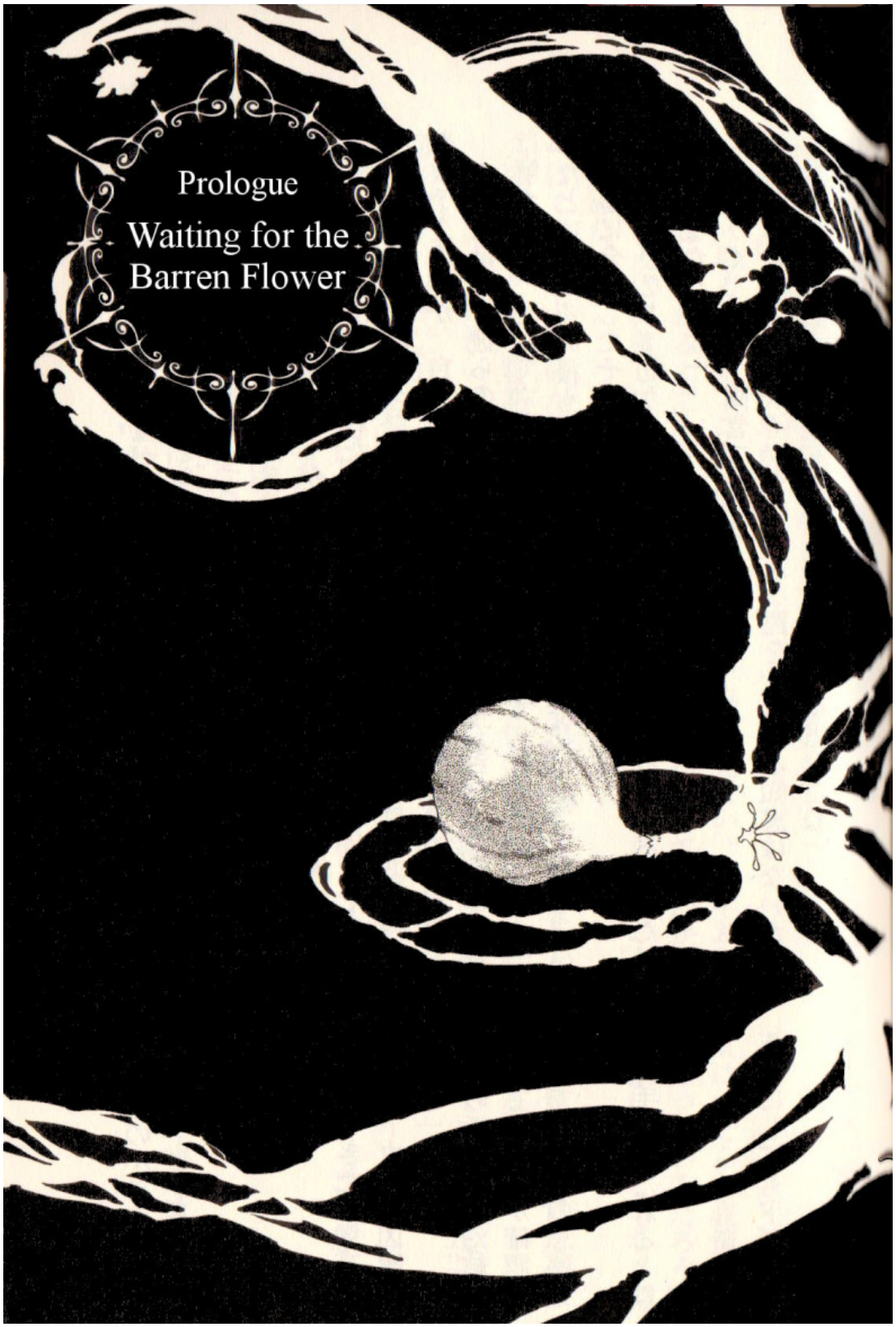
(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Table of Contents

Next Page



Prologue: Waiting for the Barren Flower

There were two Kyoma in a hole in the ground, a small, square space about five meters across. At the center there was a crude table and a chair, with one of the Kyoma atop the table and the other sitting cross-legged in the chair.

It was the 13th day after the Majin had awakened, and above them the dawn's light was just beginning to show.

The Kyoma on top of the table was shaped like a fig fruit, which split open to reveal a small mouth. “It won’t be long now. Fremy will come back to me soon,” said Tgurneu in a high-pitched voice.

The other Kyoma, the one listening to Tgurneu, was a bipedal Lizard Kyoma with three wings. It was the nameless Kyoma that Tgurneu usually used as his body.

A little bit earlier a messenger Kyoma under their command reported that The Illusion Fog Barrier that the Heroes of the Six Flowers had been trapped within had dissolved, and it had been confirmed that Nashetania, who had attacked the Six Flowers, was now on her own trying to escape. And after all of that another Flower appeared. Luckily, the seventh who bore the crest had met up with the others safely just as Tgurneu had anticipated.

“I feel relieved. She almost made a mess of my plans. I had never thought that we would be beat to the punch.”

“Perhaps she is with Dozzu’s forces.”

“Of course. Cargikk doesn’t have the wits to launch a trap like that. But if that’s the case I wonder where Dozzu acquired a fake crest. It’s strange.” Tgurneu chuckled.

“Well, it’s alright. For now we’ve gotten past the danger. I should be happy that I can see Fremy again.”

“Will that be enjoyable, Master Tgurneu?” the three winged Kyoma asked quietly.

“Ah, I want to see Fremy again soon. I want to see her face when we reunite. I wonder what kind of expression she’ll show me after not seeing me for half a year. Maybe she’ll also know just how excited I am to see her.”

Tgurneu seemed excited. Unable to suppress his enthusiasm, he started to ramble, no longer engaging the three-winged Kyoma in conversation.

“I love the faces of people. I love looking at the faces of people. Faces are the greatest instrument that humans possess. Their faces are more stimulating than any story, richer in implications than any philosophy book.”

“Smiling faces are boring. Peace of mind has no value. The beautiful faces are pain, sadness, and puzzling in agony. Those project the true condition of a human’s heart, which fills my own.”

The beak sticking out from Tgurneu’s body was moving restlessly.

“I want to see the face of humans. I want to try seeing their deepest despair and their worst suffering. Compared to this desire, reviving the Majin and what not is of little importance.”

Tgurneu moved its beak as if to shrug.

“Ah, I shouldn’t have said that. Keep this a secret from the other Kyoma.”

For the three winged Majin he didn’t need to nod in agreement. For a long time he had been a body of flesh that Tgurneu manipulated.

He knew more about the insides of Tgurneu’s mind than anyone. Tgurneu didn’t serve the Majin. He only fought for his enjoyment. He lived only to see the suffering on the faces of humans, Kyoma, and any being other than himself.

It was an absolute secret to the followers that believed in Tgurneu.

“Fremy actually showed me a wonderful face; when she was deemed worthless she showed me a face that I could never forget for the rest of my life. It was the despair of realizing that the family she loved had really only thought of her as a pawn. It was too much to bear.”

“But I am anticipating that Fremy will show me a more beautiful face. From here on out the fight with the six flowers will only drive her further into despair.”

As usual he is a bit too excited, the three winged Kyoma thought. Providing good counsel was also his job.

“You can’t be so preoccupied with just Fremy. Don’t forget that you are trying to be victorious.”

“That’s right. Right, I can’t forget. If we lose then it will all be over.”

If he defeated the Six Flowers and forced Dozzu and Cargikk to be his followers, then there would no longer be anything that could hinder Tgurneu’s objectives.

Tgurneu planned on taking possession of the Majin. It was definitely possible if he managed to get rid of all the obstacles in his way first. After that, all of the Kyoma would probably become his tools, and the lives of mankind would become an existence of endless suffering and despair for the sole purpose of amusing Tgurneu.

I wonder whether or not this future will really come. But if it did that would only happen after the Black Barren Flower arrived. Everything rested on the shoulders of the seventh who Tgurneu had planted among the Flowers.

But the moment when the seventh would take action was still quite far off into the future. First Tgurneu would frame Mora Chester as the Seventh and have her killed. The preparations for that had already been taken care of.

The three winged Kyoma was about to talk on this subject when Tgurneu said, “Should I kill Fremy? That is a terribly difficult question. Should I kill her by my own hand or should I make the Flowers kill her? There are various ways I could go about this, but which is the best to make her suffer?”

Tgurneu’s mind was still fixated on Fremy.

“Fremy will show me a wonderful face, no matter how I kill her. But there is something I’m hoping for even more incredible than that. I’m thinking about making Fremy kill herself. That would certainly lead to the most beautiful face she could ever show me. I want to drive her into the worst-case scenario where she doesn’t have any option other than to die.”

Tgurneu laughed. “Of course I don’t know how the fight with the Six Flowers will unfold. However, I think there is a sufficient possibility Fremy will take her own life…No…”

Tgurneu’s gaping mouth formed a repulsive smile.

“The seventh will absolutely drive Fremy to suicide.”

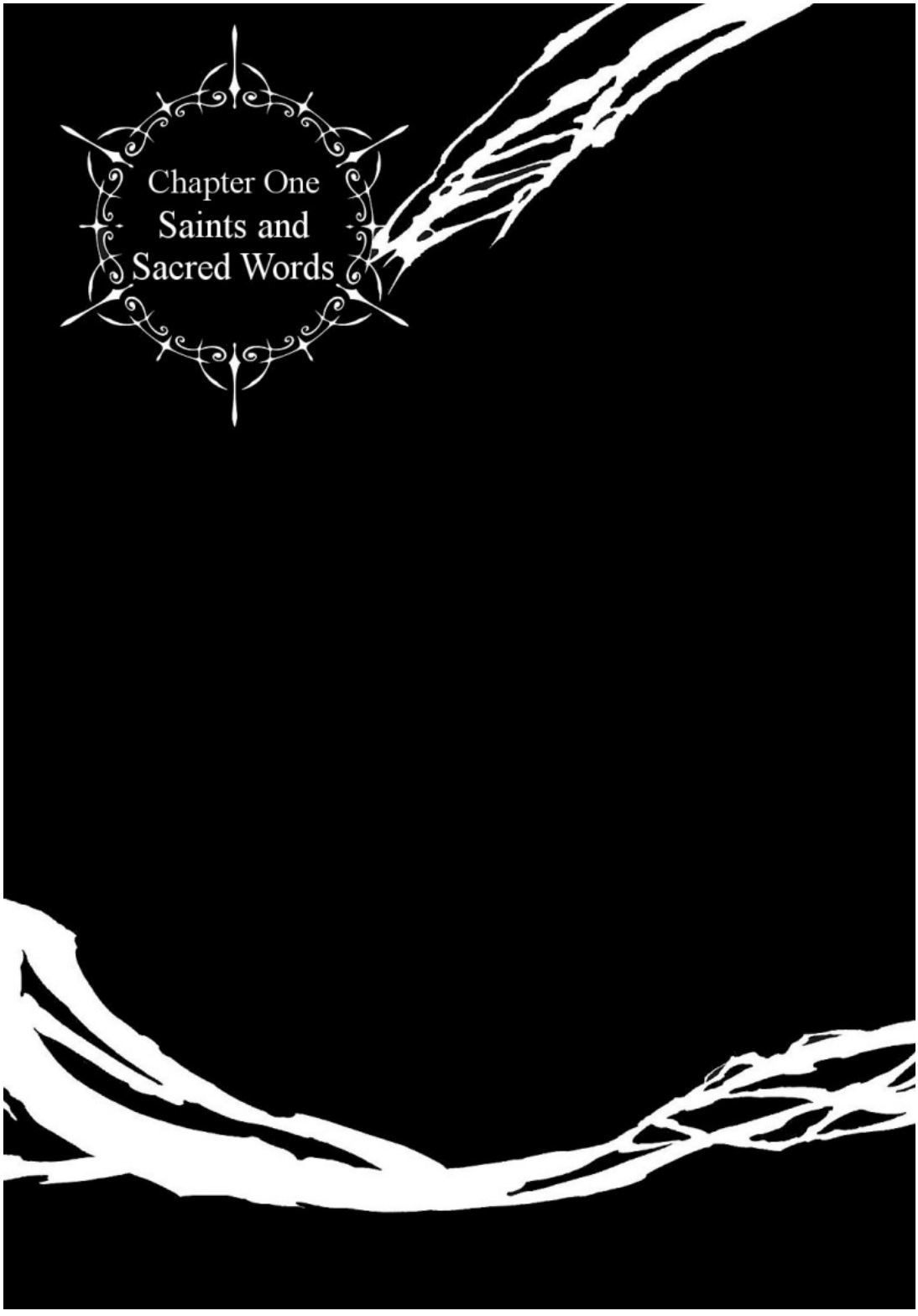
The night sky was clearly brightening. The seventh and the Six Flowers still hadn’t come, and it seemed like it would be a little bit longer before the fight between them and Tgurneu began.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page

Next Page



Chapter One: Part One

Why the hell do I care this much about Fremy? Adlet suddenly wondered as he ran through the forest.

It was the 18th day after the Majin's reawakening and the sun was already starting to set.

Adlet was running through the center of a forest in the center-north section of the Wailing Demon Territory. Hans, Goldof, Rolonia, and Fremy were behind him, and they were all heading for the area called the Fainting Mountain Range. According to Dozzu and Nashetania there was an important clue there that would decide the outcome of their fight with the Kyoma.

Allegedly under absolute secrecy, Tgurneu had built a temple dedicated to the Goddess of Fate within the mountain range. And to make matters worse, at the temple Tgurneu produced his ultimate weapon that would completely wipe out the Six Flowers: the so-called Black Barren Flower.

At the moment, Adlet and the others' objective was to determine the veracity of that information and, if what Dozzu and Nashetania said turned out to be true, locate the Black Barren Flower.

Just thirty minutes ago they had killed the Dark Specialist Number 9, a Kyoma who had been blocking the way to the Temple. And now Mora, Chamo, Dozzu, and Nashetania were waiting at the center of the forest for Adlet and the others to arrive.

The lifeless husks of the corpse soldiers lay scattered all about the forest, but now was not the time to mourn their deaths.

"…Adlet, you're deviating from the path," Fremy called out to Adlet from behind.

However, he didn't reply and kept on going straight.

"Adlet!"

Hearing her call his name a second time, Adlet returned to his senses.

"Are you listening? I'm saying that you're heading away from the path."

Adlet checked his mental map of the terrain and realized they were indeed veering a bit away from the path to the rendezvous point. He corrected his direction and continued running.

"What's the matter? You seem weird," Fremy said.

Adlet shook his head slightly as if to say everything was fine.

But she was right. He wasn't in a calm state of mind. Just a little while ago all of the people from his hometown had died, including Adlet's friend Raina. During that nightmare of a day that the villagers brought about Raina had saved Adlet's life. Back then when Adlet was a timid child he had longed to be like Raina. His friend had survived and fought against the odds to impart to the Heroes of the Six Flowers critical information, even after he'd been turned into a corpse soldier.

That friend had also died in Adlet's arms; if he had just been a little faster, he might have been able to save him.

"Fremy-san, for now please be gentle with him. Some terrible things have happened," Rolonia said.

"Yes, but I'd still like you to explain what happened first," Goldof said.

Hans replied, "Meow. We'll do so after we meet up with the others, meow."

However, the reason Adlet was troubled wasn't just because of his friend. Adlet had been suffering over the last piece of information that Raina had left him with.

The last thing that Raina had said was the truth about the Black Barren Flower; the Saint Instrument that Tgurneu had created.

"The Black Barren Flower is a Saint Instrument in the form of a human. It's a girl with white hair and a single horn on their forehead. She is a girl with terribly cold eyes."

Adlet didn't know of anyone other than Fremy who matched that description.

Still, Raina's information had not yet been proven and there was also no proof that the person Raina had talked about was Fremy. There might have been another cold-eyed girl with a horn on their forehead.

However, it was impossible to think that Raina had lied. So in light of their current predicament, there didn't seem to be anyone other than Fremy who could be the Black Barren Flower.

What if she is the Black Barren Flower? And what if I don't kill her and we are unable to save the world? Adlet had to kill her. He was a Hero of the Six Flowers. Saving the world was the fate that had been placed on his shoulders.

But for Adlet that was unbearable, to the point where he felt like his whole body was being ripped apart. If he had to let Fremy die in order to save the world, then Adlet preferred to give up his destiny of saving the world altogether

If he were the Black Barren Flower himself then he wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice his life in order to protect the world, and though he would probably be conflicted if one of his other companions were the Black Barren Flower he probably wouldn't struggle over the situation as much as he was now.

But Fremy was different. For Adlet, Fremy was special. She'd been special to him ever since the first time they'd met.

Granted, thinking back he didn't have the best of memories with Fremy. She saved his life, but she had also pointed her rifle at him a few times.

If he said kind words to her, she treated him coldly. If he worried about her, she rejected his concern. And over and over again she voiced her displeasure with his actions.

Though not in the way Hans would mean, there had been other girls. For instance, Rolonia was his friend. And of course there had been girls he'd gotten to know during his training and travels. But none of the other girls he'd met compared to Fremy.

Adlet prayed within his heart that Fremy wasn't the Black Barren Flower. However, he had a hunch that such a wish wasn't going to be granted.

"Things are starting right away, meow," Hans said.

Immediately after getting out of the forest the Heroes heard the cries of the Kyoma. A battle had erupted where Mora and the others were waiting to meet up with them.

The path to the Temple had been blocked by Dark Specialist Number 9 and his corpse soldiers, and now that the he was dead the Kyoma in the area were probably gathering to stop the Flowers, Dozzu and Nashetania. And on top of that, Tgurneu's main force was most likely heading their way as well. Adlet predicted it would be the middle of the night before they arrived, but he didn't know what would happen. However, he had a feeling they were going to be ambushed from all directions.

They had to hurry. Regardless of whether or not there was something at their destination they couldn't stop moving.

"It looks like the fight will continue all night," Fremy said and took out her rifle.

She then trained her eye on a Kyoma and shot a bullet through its head. Hans and Goldof both took out their weapons and moved to Mora and the others' aid.

In the blink of an eye about 15 Kyoma were killed, then the eight humans and the Kyoma immediately started to run again. There was no time to be happy about each other's safety.

"You were late. What were you doing?" Mora asked as they ran. They were supposed to meet up right after Number 9 had been killed

"Is that stupid cow somehow slowing us down? She should come here so Chamo can beat her to death," Chamo said.

"Hee!" Rolonia shrieked and jumped back.

Fremy, Goldof, Dozzu, and Nashetania were all looking at Rolonia with suspicion. *There's no way for me to avoid explaining what happened*, Adlet concluded.

But Adlet was more troubled about the situation because he knew he should probably tell the others what Raina had said. Adlet wanted to avoid hiding information to the best of his ability since it would just invite useless confusion and lead to mutual suspicions, but if he told them then there was a chance that they would kill Fremy right there on the spot.

As Adlet hesitated, suddenly Hans said, "Meowhihihi, I was surprised. All of a sudden Adlet hugged Fremy."

"Huh?" Mora said in plain confusion.

"Then he tried to drag her into the bushes nearby, meow. Both Rolonia and myself stopped him, but Adlet wouldn't listen to us at all. He then started to take his clothes off and my jaw dropped. I was speechless."

"Oy, don't make up stories."

Mora's mouth was wide open in astonishment. And Fremy was looking at Hans in irritation.

"Huh? Why did he take off his clothes? Was Adlet injured?" Chamo scratched her head, not understanding the conversation.

"Would you mind taking this seriously?" Dozzu asked and Hans shrugged. He then shot a glance at Adlet, his eyes clearly telling him to talk.

Adlet knew what Hans was thinking. They were both planning on concealing the truth and letting Fremy go free.

In addition to the question of whether Fremy was the Black Barren Flower or not, there was one more serious question. Just how much did Fremy herself know? Perhaps she didn't know that she was the Black Barren Flower, or perhaps she was just hiding the truth.

If Fremy was hiding the fact that she knew then she would definitely be their enemy; however, if she didn't know then that changed things. That would mean that Fremy was being used by Tgurneu and had been planted among the Six Flowers to travel alongside them without knowing her true identity. If that were the case then Fremy would also be devoted to stopping the Black Barren Flower.

For the time being Adlet was resolved. He would hide a bit of the truth and watch Fremy's reaction.

“…Ah, so let me start.”

As they ran Adlet began to tell his companions about what had happened in the center of the forest. As he did, he subtly checked the look on Fremy’s face.

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The fact that there was someone living among the corpse soldiers. The fact that that person knew about the Black Barren Flower. The fact that Rolonia had been the only person who had realized that. The fact that the person in question had been Adlet’s close friend. And how they heard the situation about the Black Barren Flower from him. All of that Adlet explained briefly to the others.

There was just one thing that he didn’t tell them. He didn’t tell them Raina’s last words detailing how the Black Barren Flower was a Saint Instrument with the appearance of a human girl with white hair and a horn on her head.

“Raina… that corpse soldier was still trying to tell us something. But his voice had already faded away. Rolonia tried desperately to heal him, but…”

Adlet shook his head and a silence fell over all of the companions as they continued to dash through the forest.

“There’s absolutely no way that I can tell you to not be disheartened… But Adlet, even though it’s painful, please try not to let it break you down,” Mora said, trying to console him.

The companions came to a stop and Nashetania placed her hand to her chest. “That brave young man showed honor,” she said.

Goldof followed suit, placing his own hand onto his chest, and Dozzu stood up on his hind legs and lightly lifted up his forelegs to show his condolences. Chamo just hung her head, the look on her face clearly showing that she didn’t know what she should say.

Seemingly lost in thought, Fremy just stared at Adlet,

“What’s the matter, Fremy?”

“…I’m sorry. I was never taught what kind of words I should say when people die.”

“I see? Don’t worry about it,” Adlet said and observed the expression on her face.

He couldn’t decide whether she was genuinely worrying about him or whether she was feeling something else entirely.

Hans was also watching Fremy out of the corners of his eye. Perhaps he had noticed something from her behavior.

“But what’s more important is the Barren Flower. We have to make the most of the information he gave us or Raina will never be able to rest in peace.”

The others nodded in response to Adlet’s words and then they all resumed their run.

“Stealing the Power of Fate….Does such a Saint Instrument actually exist? I can’t believe it,” Mora said, her face completely pale.

“Why do you think that?” Adlet asked her.

“Well there are two reasons. The first is that I have never heard of a method to take power from a Saint Instrument. Only the person in whom the god resides can wield the power of the god. Even if it were possible to create a Saint

Instrument that could borrow a god's power, for it to take the power of a Saint…"

"It's most likely possible for Tgurneu," Dozzu said, interrupting Mora's explanation.

Dozzu's tone didn't sound like mere conjecture. It sounded like he was certain that Tgurneu had done it.

"Why are you so certain? How do you know?" Adlet asked.

It was clear that Dozzu knew more than Mora, who had thoroughly investigated the skills of the Saints at the Head Temple.

"It is thanks to Hayuha. That is the only thing I can say at the moment."

That's strange, Adlet thought. He was certain that Dozzu had used Hayuha's power to search the past, but what he and Tgurneu had seen should have been related to the Majin's true identity. *So then why did they also possess knowledge about the Saint Instruments?*

And what's more, the Saint of a Flower should have told the head of the head temple everything she knew. Even if Dozzu looked into the past he shouldn't have more knowledge about the Saints than Mora. And what reason would the Saint of a Flower have for not telling the Head of the Temples everything she knew?

Nevertheless, at the moment they needed to deal with the Black Barren Flower and Fremy.

"Adlet-san, Rolonia-san, Hans-san, is that all you heard for the corpse soldier?" Dozzu asked.

"Yeah, that's right."

"How was a Saint Instrument such as The Black Barren Flower created? That is the most important problem… the Instruments are usually made into jewels, holy writing, barriers, crests, or even flowers…"

"Raina died before he could clearly explain everything."

"That is regrettable. I should have believed what Rolonia-san was saying. That was an error on my part. I saw the writing too."

"You weren't to blame. I mostly didn't believe Rolonia either," Adlet replied, studying the small Kyoma's face.

Dozzu didn't look at Adlet with any suspicion, and it didn't seem like the Kyoma was hiding anything either

"Has this information been confirmed?" Fremy asked.

"At the very least we can't think of it as just being one of Tgurneu's bluffs, meow. For us to find the corpse soldier was completely by chance. If it were a bluff then the information would have been placed somewhere that could easily be found, meow."

Rolonia then said, "An-and, ummm… he didn't seem to be on Tgurneu's side."

"I see," Fremy replied with a voice devoid of emotion.

"But for starters there is still a possibility that the corpse soldier got its hands on false information. Tgurneu lied to not only me, but also the other Kyoma in order to hide his true intentions. The corpse soldier might have been fooled by one of these lies."

"That may be true, meow," Hans said.

Adlet was also considering that possibility.

“How did that corpse soldier get that information? You didn’t hear that, huh?”

“Before we could, he died. If we had just found him a little earlier then he would have been able to tell us before it was too late, meow.”

“…That is unfortunate. Really unfortunate.”

Fremy then looked away in thought. It seemed like she was genuinely upset that they weren’t able to get the information; she might be cold, but that didn’t mean she never showed any emotion.

“But, with just this information we cannot take any kind of action, so it looks like we have to go to the Temple of Fate after all,” Dozzu said.

“As expected. Let’s hurry,” Fremy said.

There was nothing unnatural about her behavior, it just seemed she was desperate to gather even the slightest piece of information about the Black Barren Flower.

“Obachachan, you seem distracted,” Chamo said suddenly.

Mora had seemed bewildered as she used her second sight to search the area.

“Obachan, you can use your Saint Instrument searching technique? That can find the Black Barren Flower.”

“Th-that’s right. Sorry.”

“Get it together already.”

In a hurry, Mora started to recite an incantation. Then her eyes began to shine slightly. With those eyes she started to observe not just her companions and the surrounding areas, but everywhere and everything.

“It seems like if the Black Barren Flower is not near the Flowers then they cannot demonstrate their abilities. If that’s the case, then I wonder if the seventh has possession of it?” Nashetania said.

Chamo then cut in. “So what if the Seventh gets close to Chamo and everyone else? If they carry the Black Barren Flower then without having to do anything the crests would disappear and Chamo and everyone would die.”

“Except me,” Fremy added.

At that moment Adlet noticed Chamo going pale.

“Are you alright, Chamo?”

“…Chamo is scared. If the enemy attacks us head on Chamo will definitely not lose. But, things like a gem inside Chamo’s Jyuma’s stomachs, or a Saint Instrument that can remove the crests. ..Chamo’s power can’t do anything about that.”

“Calm down, Chamo.”

“Chamo’s calm. Be calm,” Chamo said, slapping her cheeks again and again. It was clear she was still scared. “Obachan, how’s your search? Have you still not found the Black Barren Flower?”

“The only trace of a Saint Instrument that I can see now are the eight crests here. There are no other signs here, in the surrounding area, or on any of the paths leading here.”

“So what you’re saying is that the Black Barren Flower isn’t here? Alright, Chamo is okay again,” Chamo said,

craning her head to the side.

Then Adlet spoke, “Of course, you can’t find a Saint Instrument that isn’t being used.”

“That’s right. I can only find Saint Instruments that are in use. I can also detect the areas where the Saint Instrument had been used in the past.”

“Maybe after the Black Barren Flower’s abilities were revealed, its use was stopped in a hurry?” Chamo asked.

“Most likely Tgurneu knows about the existence of a technique to locate Saint Instruments. He has probably taken that into consideration,” Dozzu said.

I highly doubt that Tgurneu’s greatest weapon would be traceable through a single technique , Adlet thought before asking, “Mora, is there a way to make it so that the traces of the Saint Instrument aren’t found?”

“I can’t say there isn’t. In the past many criminals tried to do that, and a number of them may have succeeded. However, without knowing what kind of form the Black Barren Flower was made into…” Mora sighed.

Adlet thought back to what happened yesterday. When Adlet had been searching for Goldof, Mora had lent him the ability to search for Saint Instruments. At that time he had looked at Fremy, but he hadn’t seen anything unusual. *Is Fremy not the Black Barren Flower? Or is she simply not activating her ability. Or was her ability active but they were just looking past it?* At the moment he didn’t have an answer for any of those questions.

“For the time being, Mora-san, please continue to use your technique to seek out the Saint Instrument. I cannot say it will be effective for certain, but your ability may have an effect on protecting us from the power of the Black Barren Flower,” Dozzu said.

“Right. It won’t be difficult to use my second sight while I’m searching either. Leave it to me,” Mora agreed and continued to run.

“Rolonia,” Fremy said with only a hint of kindness in her cold voice. “You did well. Thank you. If you weren’t here we would never have gotten this information.”

“Ri-right. I’m glad that you think so,” Rolonia replied, making a clumsy smile.

If Fremy knows that she is the Black Barren Flower, Adlet thought, *would she talk like this?* The most important information still hadn’t been revealed, so to some extent she should appear to be relieved. However, Fremy didn’t seem any different than usual.

So Fremy doesn’t know she’s the seventh after all. At the very least that’s how it seemed to Adlet.

“About thirty Kyoma are approaching from behind,” Mora warned. “There are also Kyoma lying in wait at the edge of the mountain.”

Adlet clucked his tongue. For a little while the enemy hadn’t launched an attack against them, but now it looked like they had just been preparing to confront the Flowers.

“We don’t need a plan, meow. Let’s just take them out,” Hans said and twisted around to fight with the Kyoma behind him. The rest of the group joined him without missing a beat.

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For the next two hours or so the Heroes encountered battle after battle on the way to the Temple. The Kyoma were coming at the Heroes and throwing away their lives as they tried to stop them. The Kyoma would attack then retreat, then if the Heroes tried to advance again the Kyoma would return with yet another attack. As the number of Kyoma

diminished with each attack, Adlet and the others slowly made their way forward.

On the frontlines were Goldof and Rolonia. Even though they were allies, to see Goldof emotionlessly beat down the Kyoma and Rolonia spew curses as they fought was a bit weird.

“Fremy! Watch out!” Adlet was at the rear. As Fremy was aiming her rifle a snake Kyoma approached her from behind and was about to strike her back.

Adlet then rushed close from the side and twisted the Kyoma’s neck. He then slashed at it, but it kept moving about and it didn’t stop until he jabbed some paralyzing darts into it.

“Thanks for the help.”

“I have your back,” Adlet said as he pressed his back to hers so that they could both look out over the area. There were a swarm of Kyoma in front of him, so he used his darts and sword to hold them back.

Adlet thought about their predicament as he fought. Being able to think about other things while swinging a sword about would probably be difficult for an ordinary swordsman, but Adlet had trained extensively to be able to do just that, and with all the battles that were happening one after another, he was getting quite used to it.

It was difficult to believe that Fremy knew she was the Black Barren Flower. At the Illusion Fog Barrier it had been Fremy who had saved his life, and she had helped him expose Nashetania’s true identity. Even after entering the Wailing Demon Territory, Fremy had continued to contribute to the Flowers’ cause. When they had been escaping from Tgurneu she had taken the rear and in the Forest of Severed Fingers she had gone ahead and scouted the area for the group. Also Fremy was the one who had shot Number 9. She didn’t take any kind of action that would interfere with Mora, Goldof, or Rolonia.

But this was not proof that Fremy didn’t know that she was the Black Barren Flower. She could have just prioritized exposing the true identity of the seventh at the Illusion Fog Barrier. And it was plausible that in the fights since then in the Wailing Demon Territory she had just been working hard to not seem suspicious.

What was unnatural though was the time when Adlet encountered her before they entered the Illusion Fog Barrier. Fremy had said that they she wouldn’t meet up with the other Flowers. She said that if they crossed paths then Fremy would be killed. Adlet was the one who forced her to accompany him.

If Fremy was the Black Barren Flower and she had intended on killing the others then her actions were extremely illogical. She wouldn’t have been able to use her power as he Saint Instrument if she hadn’t been with the other Flowers. S*o what would have been Freny’s plan if I hadn’t dragged her along?*

Thinking about it from that perspective, Adlet had no choice but to conclude that Fremy wasn’t aware of her true identity.

“Adlet. You seem like your mind is distracted, but it’ll be a problem for me if you don’t concentrate on the fight.”

“You don’t need to worry. I can fight and think at the same time. I am the World’s Strongest.”

“You are skilled, but as usual you’re way too confident,” Fremy said with a sigh.

“Worry about yourself and don’t let your guard down. It will be a problem if you’re injured.”

“Everyone, the path from here on out will get dangerous. Make some light,” Mora said to everyone.

The sun was already setting and they had been fighting under the faint light of the setting sun to the west for a while. But now that too was on the brink of disappearing. Adlet touched the light gem in one of the pouches on his waist and chanted the sacred incantation he’d been taught. Although the risk of being discovered was low, he made sure

the stone in the pouch kept the light as dim as possible, just in case.

The Kyoma were unconcerned about the darkness. They just attacked from ahead in sync with the voice from the Kyoma that seemed to be their commander.

“Break through!”

With the sheer force of his armor-clad, muscular body Goldof charged into the herd of Kyoma by himself. Their attacks bounced off him ineffectually and in response they were flung back by the force of his charge.

As the fight continued, Adlet kept on thinking. Fremy doesn’t know her true identity. If that were true then Adlet’s heart hurt even more.

If Fremy was completely their enemy then Adlet would probably be able to kill her. The memories he had with her, and even the slight ways she had been able to affect his heart, he would be able to forget them like a dream.

However, if Fremy were fighting alongside the Flowers… if everything she’d said up till that point had been the truth…

“…Shit.”

I can’t kill her. No matter what, Adlet couldn’t kill Fremy. Even if that was a betrayal of the world. Even if that invited his own death. And even though he had risked his entire life in the pursuit of revenge.

Why? Adlet asked himself.

Since the first time they’d met Fremy had weighed on Adlet’s mind. Just looking at her hugging her puppy was enough to capture Adlet’s heart. At that time he had seen a girl who was terribly hurt. She seemed to be suffering far more than the dog she was holding.

Adlet’s love didn’t start as a flutter, but as a throbbing pain within his chest.

After that in the Illusion Fog Barrier he had heard about Fremy’s past. She had been fiercely loyal to Tgurneu and her mother and she had assassinated warriors who were likely candidates to become Heroes of the Six Flowers, but as soon as she had been beaten by Chamo it had been decided that her usefulness was over and she had been thrown away.

As Adlet ran away from the other Flowers Fremy told him the reason why she wanted revenge. It wasn’t that she was beyond hatred or that she didn’t want to try and kill them. It was because Tgurneu, her mother, and her so-called friends had used her love to get what they wanted. Hiding behind their false affection they had continued to deceive Fremy for years.

“…What I can’t forgive is not that they tried to kill me. It’s that they pretended to love me. “

And when she said that Adlet could never forget the expression he saw on her face.
Fremy was using her hatred as a crutch to keep on living. She had been completely engulfed by the solitude of losing her home. And looking into her eye then, all Adlet could see was despair.

Adlet understood Fremy’s suffering so much that it pained him. He had the same kind of existence that she did. He had also lost every reason to keep living and now he only lived for revenge. He was just a murderer now. And he was all alone.

However, Adlet thought that only despair and hatred were not the base feelings in Fremy’s heart. Adlet had seen the real Fremy when she had hugged her puppy and when she had saved him when he was injured. Strip away all of the

pain and suffering and she was just a gentle and good-natured girl. Adlet was sure of that.

Adlet wanted to try and see the real Fremy, but at the moment she was being crushed and hidden away by despair and hatred. *Does Fremy herself think that the real her died a long time ago?* He didn't know the answer to that question, but it didn't matter. He still wanted to try and release her from her prison.

The fact that he loved Fremy didn't seem real to Adlet; it was like a dream in which he only wanted to make her live a happy life. But even that dream might soon come crashing down if they confirmed that Fremy was the Black Barren Flower. It was very likely that if that happened they would have no other way to stop the Saint Instrument other than to kill her.

"I found the Temple of Fate!" Mora's voice reverberated through the forest.

Mora was using her second sight from the center of the pack. Its range only extended across the mountain they were currently on.

"The Temple is at the heart of this mountain. Everyone, give it your all! We just have to push a little bit more!"

The companions nodded in agreement and quickly scaled the slope.

"How's everything with the Kyoma?"

"I'm checking now. Within the temple… there doesn't seem to be any. All of the Kyoma are coming out to attack us. If we deal with the Kyoma around us then there shouldn't be anything left in our way."

Adlet looked up to the sky. The night was already beginning to pale. It would still take time for the main force that Tgurneu was commanding to make their way to their position. Which meant there was enough time to search within the Temple.

"Goldof, Chamo, protect Mora. The others sweep up the rest of the Kyoma, meow."

In response to Hans' words the group moved all at once and dispersed.

"Mora, it isn't necessary to fight. Search inside the Temple. Be on the lookout for a Saint Instrument."

Mora nodded and began to concentrate. Meanwhile, Adlet threw poison darts at the remaining Kyoma. Then Hans came up from behind him.

What do you want to talk about? Adlet wondered.

It was an opportune time. Adlet also had something he wanted to talk to Hans about. Hans had been one of the three people who'd heard Raina's true last words. He must have been thinking about that information and checking it against his thoughts regarding Fremy's actions.

"How does she look to you?" Hans said in a barely audible voice; if he spoke loudly then Mora might be able to pick it up with her Second Sight.

"There is nothing strange about Fremy's behavior. Even thinking of everything that has happened until now, I think that Fremy doesn't know she is the Black Barren Flower," Adlet replied confidently.

However, Hans just stared at Adlet with a cold glare. Adlet had never seen the lighthearted Hans show such an emotion.

"This is the first time, meow."

"…What is?"

"The first time I've felt disappointed in you."

Those words struck Adlet like a hammer. He had been ridiculed and made fun of more times than he could count. However, Hans' words now had a completely different meaning.

"Since we got on the path to the temple Fremy has been puzzling over something, and it seems like she's trying not to reveal what she's worrying about to all of us. Are you saying that your mind is so clouded that you couldn't even realize that?"

"What is she puzzling over?"

"I don't know, meow," Hans said and then sighed.

"I had thought you were a considerable man of action, meow… but you're just a kid after all."

As an assassin Hans had had to deal with various objectives and clients, whereas Adlet had lived close to half of his life on Atro's mountain. The difference in their experience and the difference in their abilities to read people was clear.

But Adlet believed that he and Fremy had connected somewhat on an emotional level. That was something Hans didn't have. No matter what Hans said Adlet would not distrust Fremy.

"Of course she is worrying. However I'm not convinced she's the enemy. It would be good to let her float a little bit more, meow."

Adlet had that same thought. *What is at the Temple of Fate? And even if we uncovered some kind of secret there would it be too late?*

If they talked too long the others would grow suspicious, so Adlet was about to distance himself from Hans when Hans whispered.

"I will tell you one thing. Then you can tell Rolonia after. But I need to say it since at the moment our conversation isn't going anywhere, meow."

Adlet looked to Rolonia in front of him who was busy spewing curses at the Kyoma. *Maybe it's tough to talk to her right now.*

"If we confirm that Fremy is the Black Barren Flower, I'll kill her."

Trying to conceal how much those words shook him, Adlet countered, "Fremy doesn't know she…"

"You're right. There is a possibility that she doesn't know she's the Black Barren Flower. Even so, I'm still going to kill her."

Before Adlet could say anything, Hans anticipated his response and added, "You can't stop me, Adlet."

As if there was nothing left to talk about, Hans walked away. Staring at his back, Adlet made up his mind.

If Fremy knew that she was the Black Barren Flower and she was just lying to them then Adlet would kill her himself. That was the same conclusion Hans had come to.

But if Fremy didn't know and she was just being used then Adlet would protect her. He would need to find a way to keep her from dying and stop the others from killing her.

Perhaps it was dangerous. Perhaps there was a chance of total annihilation. However, Adlet was resolved not to proceed in any other way, and Hans' cold-hearted words actually stimulated his resolve.

There was definitely a way to protect Fremy. If they finally made it to the Temple of Fate then they might find a way to seal the powers of the Black Barren Flower. There might even be a way to prevent their powers from being absorbed. /if they found something like that then it wouldn't be necessary to kill Fremy.

And Adlet had another plan. *Hadn't Raina said that if the Black Barren Flower wasn't next to the Flowers then it couldn't manifest its effect? In other words, it would be okay if Fremy and the Flowers went separate ways.*

Adlet was worried about leaving Fremy all alone, but she was strong. It probably wouldn't be difficult for her to survive.

Losing a member would hurt them, but they would still have enough people to stage a diversion or trap, so it probably wouldn't be that big of a problem. Perhaps that would be the only way Adlet could protect her.

Adlet's dream was to make Fremy happy. He simply couldn't deal with the idea of never seeing the smile of the most important person to him in the whole world.

"I… am the Strongest Man in the World," Adlet muttered.

And there was no way the Strongest Man in the World couldn't make his dream of helping one girl find happiness a reality.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page
Next Page

Chapter One: Part Two

There were still several hundred meters left until they reached the Temple, but there weren't any more Kyoma heading their way. Rolonia ran at the head of the group was, straight down the path that Mora had indicated.

"Adlet, this is strange," Mora communicated through her mountain echoes.

Adlet focused in on her voice.

"The Kyoma are moving differently than before. There are some that are moving away from us and hiding."

That is strange, Adlet thought. In their fights up till that point all of the Kyoma had attacked the Flowers head on. It had seemed like their objective had just been to stop them, so it was a bit unexpected to hear that they were running away.

"What do you think? Guide us."

"…Well, I can't imagine this being anything other than a trap. When we break into the temple they might plan on interfering with our search. So we should exterminate them, preferably before entering the temple. I'll find where the Kyoma are hiding and relay that information to everyone."

Mora gave directions and the Heroes separated and went to take care of the Kyoma.

As Adlet fought one of the Kyoma, he could confirm what Mora had observed earlier. The Kyoma was indeed different from the ones he had fought in the past. Earlier the Kyoma had simply charged at him head-on without any kind of strategy, but this particular Kyoma was retreating, despite being injured by Adlet's attacks.

Adlet felt like it was being ordered about by someone with some kind of intelligence.

Finally, Adlet managed to hit the Kyoma with one of his paralyzing darts. Instantly the it froze and the next instant a gunshot rang from behind him and a bullet split open the Kyoma's head.

"What the hell, I don't need any help," Adlet said without turning to look behind him.

Before Adlet knew it Fremy had ran up beside him.

What do you want? Adlet thought.

"Are you at peace with the corpse soldiers already?"

"Ah, I don't have time to be thinking about that. I have to press on for Raina."

"Right, that's good."

The next instant Fremy cut in without beating around the bush. "For a while something has been on your mind. What?"

Mora called out to them and told them that there was another Kyoma nearby.

As Adlet headed in that direction, he pretended to be calm and answered, “Obviously I’m thinking about a variety of things. Why was the Black Barren Flower created and where is it? Who is the seventh? What should we do after we reach the temple? Things like that.”

“I’m asking because it doesn’t seem like that’s all you’re thinking about.”

Fremy raised her rifle and shot a Kyoma.

“That is obvious. I’m thinking about how I can make you happy.”

“You have the time for that?” Fremy asked coldly.

“I’ve been thinking about it this whole time. That hasn’t changed since the first time I met you.”

“You should think about something else. It’s obvious what my happiness is. You don’t have to think about it.”

“What?”

“Succeeding with my revenge. And after that dying peacefully. Just that would be happiness for me.”

Adlet went silent and the two of them continued to search for the enemy under Mora’s instructions.

“That can’t be everything there is to your happiness. That’s why I’m thinking about it.”

“Happiness for me is not something you can decide,” Fremy shot back. “You don’t have the time to be thinking about meaningless things. Focus on fighting.”

It isn’t meaningless, Adlet thought. *It’s about you.*

“Sorry, but I have no intention of stopping. I don’t even think it’s possible for me to stop. Before I realize it’s even happening, I start to think about how to make you happy.”

“You’re a fool.”

“What I think about is not something you can decide.”

“…That may be true.”

A slightly tense air blew in between the two of them. In the distance they could hear Rolonia’s curses, Mora’s commands, and the Kyoma shouting code-like phrases, but amidst all that noise the two of them were silent.

“Just dying will not make you happy. Didn’t you say that you wanted to see your dog again?”

“I’ve given up on that too. Even if I saw him again, it would be meaningless. Since I will die somehow or another he won’t be able to continue to be with my pet until he dies as well.”

“Still, you want to see him don’t you?”

“It’s impossible. The Wailing Demon Territory is vast. Even if I called out to him or blew a dog whistle, it wouldn’t reach my puppy. There is no way I could find him.”

So you do want to see him again after all , Adlet concluded.

“It might be a tiny thing, but if that is what would make you happy then I will devote all my energy to making it a reality. You make me feel like that.”

“Right. Do as you like.”

“I promise, I will absolutely make it so that you see your dog again. I am the Strongest Man in the World, so there’s no way I will break that promise.”

Fremy shook her head from side to side as if to say they were just empty words.

“Speaking of your dog, what was its name?”

“Humans give names to dogs. I only found that out recently.”

“Well then, will you give it a name when you see it again? I think that would be better.”

Fremy seemed irritated, as if she were thinking, what for?

“I can’t stand when you act like this. It makes me want to shoot you in the back.”

Truly I don’t have the best memories with Fremy, Adlet thought. So it was strange that despite their negative memories, his feelings about her didn’t change.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about but there are two Kyoma heading your way. They slipped past Chamo and are running towards you,” Mora’s voice informed them.

Adlet and Fremy both went on their guard and surveyed the area. It was true they had been hearing the calls of the Kyoma for a while now, like they were giving directions to each other in some sort of code.

They’re close, Adlet thought.

The next instant two Kyoma jumped out at them from the bushes: a mid-sized lion and the other a relatively small white lizard.

Instantly Adlet threw some paralyzing darts and Fremy shot her rifle, but they both missed.

They were trying to slip around Adlet and Fremy to escape, but Adlet managed to stop the lion Kyoma.

“Take care of the white one!” Adlet shouted to Fremy.

She should be able to kill it soon, Adlet estimated. But then something unusual happened. As Fremy was reloading her rifle the bullet slipped from her fingers and fell to the ground as the white lizard Kyoma slipped by.

It was the first time Adlet had seen Fremy mess up reloading her rifle. Her fingers had always moved smoothly, faster than the eye could see.

Fremy’s eye was glued to the white lizard Kyoma, but it didn’t look like she was going to chase after it. *She’s hesitating about something.*

However, there was no time to think about that so Adlet started to pursue the white lizard Kyoma.

The white Kyoma was constantly shouting something. Judging from the tone of its voice it was perhaps a Kyoma capable of human speech, but Adlet couldn’t make out what it was saying.

Then from the distance Adlet saw Dozzu rushing over his way.

“I don’t need any help,” Adlet shouted.

He climbed through some bushes, went over a boulder and finally reached a small plain at the center of the

mountain.

There were over ten dead Kyoma lying there. From their injuries he realized that Rolonia had killed them. However, he could no longer see the white lizard Kyoma he'd been chasing.

The next instant the Kyoma that should have been dead rose up and attacked Adlet in unison.

Three of the newly risen Kyoma reached him first, but they were not opponents that he could deal with in an instant. Adlet twisted his body and dodged their attacks. Then with his sword and bombs he managed to take them all down before finally exhaling.

"Look out!" Dozzu shouted as his lightning fried the remaining Kyoma at Adlet's feet.

The other Kyoma that had seemed dead bent backwards and twisted in agony before drawing their last breaths.

A double ambush? Adlet wondered.

The Kyoma had pretended they were dead to lure one of the Heroes to their location. Then while that Hero's guard was down they had intended to attack, and then after making the Hero think they had gotten past the enemy the second group would attack as their heart desired.

It seemed like there was a fairly clever Kyoma among their enemies.

"Are you alright?" He heard Dozzu say. Adlet nodded.

"Did you stop the white lizard Kyoma?"

"It didn't run this way."

That's bad, Adlet thought. Perhaps that Kyoma had been the one that had been issuing orders. He didn't want any Kyoma that could set a trap of that level to keep living.

"…Adlet, Dozzu. It seems like all the Kyoma have been eliminated," Mora's mountain echoes sailed through the air.

"Really? Is the white lizard Kyoma dead?"

"….There aren't any Kyoma still alive. I checked, so relax."

Adlet headed towards Mora's location as she directed. But he couldn't shake off the uncomfortable feeling he had about the bullet Fremy had dropped and the white lizard Kyoma.

And there was another strange thing. *Why had Dozzu come to help him?*

Wait, does it even matter? Adlet concluded and put those thoughts to rest.

#

At last Adlet and the others were standing in front of the Temple of Fate.

They had been able to see the temple in the background as they took out the remaining Kyoma, but now that it was right in front of their eyes nervousness rushed through them. The temple was mostly hidden by the rock face so they couldn't clearly make it out, but after looking at it for a long time they spotted what looked like a roof, and in the middle of the rock face was what looked like a door. However it was sealed shut with some sort of chain. It was an unrefined building that didn't seem like a temple; in fact, it seemed more like a fortress or a prison.

"We can't search a building this big that quickly," Adlet said, but Mora shook her head.

“It doesn’t seem like the building is that massive. I don’t see anything other than fairly normal rooms where people lived and an ominously large room that seemed to have been used by the Kyoma. Perhaps there is something important underground.”

“What’s down there?”

“…An underground room, no a labyrinth. Wait a moment, I’m searching for a path.”

The structure in front of them really didn’t seem like a temple, Adlet thought. *No kind of temple had a need for underground rooms, labyrinths, and massive, strong walls.*

Then suddenly Mora gulped and her face turned pale.

Maybe she found something, Adlet wondered.

“Th…this…”

“What’s the matter, Mora?” Adlet asked.

For a moment Mora was quiet and she looked over to Dozzu and Nashetania.

“I’m sorry, but we cannot take you two any further.”

“What?” Nashetania shouted at Mora. “What was the point of coming if we get left behind here?”

“We might not be able to bring enemies of the Six Flowers any closer.”

“What did you find, Mora?” Adlet asked.

She shook her head from side to side, as if she were scared to even say the specifics.

“Our knowledge might be essential to finding the truth about the Black Barren Flower. I apologize for sounding rude, Mora-san, but there is no way that we can accept your proposal.”

Chamo countered Dozzu’s words by saying, “Well, haven’t you and Nashetania already served your purposes in coming here? Let’s kill you.”

The atmosphere grew tense and Chamo started to lift her foxtail grass to her mouth, but before things could escalate Fremy lightly grabbed Chamo’s hand.

“We need Dozzu and Nashetania. At least for the time being.”

In her other hand Fremy produced a bomb, which she then threw at the temple gate. After a couple explosions the chain that was keeping the door shut broke and fell to the ground.

“Now the most important thing for us to focus on is finding the truth about the Black Barren Flower. However, we also must remain vigilant around Dozzu and Nashetania.”

“Are you going to ally with us? Thank you very much,” Dozzu asked.

Fremy however replied coldly, “I’m not doing this for you.”

Dozzu and Fremy moved to step inside the temple, however Mora stood in front of the gate and stopped them.

“What Fremy said is right, but if I were to allow them in here…”

“You have been stubborn for a while. What happened,” Adlet asked, but at first Mora hesitated to answer.

“Inside the giant room in the labyrinth is a single Saint. She doesn’t look to be anything other than a corpse, but she is without a doubt alive.”

“What does that have to do with us?” Fremy replied.

Mora hesitated even more before answering, “I checked with my second sight, but I have no proof. I could simply be wrong, so don’t laugh at me. But I think that Saint….Is the Saint of a Flower.”

All of the Flowers were stunned speechless. However, Nashetania and Dozzu just looked at everyone calmly. It was as if they were thinking, so she’s here after all.

#

Goldof and Adlet rammed the locked door open with their shoulders, then everyone rushed into the Temple of Fate all at once. However, Chamo did leave a number of her Jyuma outside to stand guard.

Though they couldn’t tell from the outside, the inside of the temple was very bright. There were a number of glass lamps embedded into the ceiling and each housing flashing jewels; the same light gems that Adlet and the others had. Though it must have been a fairly precious commodity, the temple used them instead of normal lamps, which was extremely luxurious. Even the Piena tournament grounds or its court hadn’t been that luxurious.

In contrast to the modest and crude exterior, the inside of the temple was built in a way that really didn’t seem like a temple. The carpet spread across the floor and the wide entrance hall with a hanging tapestry made it seem like an aristocrat’s mansion.

Mora gave them a simple overview of the temple layout above ground and of the labyrinthine paths below. According to her the person who seemed to be the Saint of a Flower was in the direct center of that labyrinth.

“Is that really the Saint of a Flower?” she wondered aloud.

Adlet and the others headed straight for the underground passages, ignoring the areas that seemed like the main hall and the eating hall.

The Saint of a Flower. For Adlet their existence seemed like a character from a fairy tale more than a person from history. Even if Mora said that she was alive and in the temple, it still didn’t seem real to him.

A thousand years ago the Saint of a Flower suddenly appeared when the Majin and the Kyoma were on the verge of destroying the world. She demonstrated the powers of a Saint that until then no one had even heard of and fought with the Majin which up to that point had been completely untouchable.

After sealing the Majin in the Land of Fallen Tears she left behind the crests of the Six Flowers and the temples to choose the corresponding Heroes. Then she imparted the method of becoming a Saint onto the people of the world. It was safe to say that Adlet and the others’ ability to fight with the Kyoma now was all thanks to the legacy left behind by the Saint of a Flower.

And just like how she arrived, the Saint of a Flower suddenly disappeared and no matter how hard people searched they couldn’t find a single clue.

She didn’t seem human. In fact, there were some people in the world who actually believed that she was a god.

“It might not be so strange that she is alive. The powers of the Saint of Fate are beyond our imagination. I’m not so sure whether it is so impossible to think that she has control over eternal life.”

“A successor never emerged after the Saint of a Flower left. So all this time we had thought that the power of Fate was a special thing. But…was the reality simpler than that?”

However the fact that she was alive wasn’t that important. The problem was why she was here and what Tgurneu had been doing at the temple. And on top of that there was the issue of what Dozzu was planning on doing at the temple.

As Mora had said, it was dangerous for Dozzu and Nashetania to get close to the Saint of a Flower. However Adlet didn’t have the slightest idea what they could be planning on doing.

Still, in order to know more about the Black Barren Flower, Dozzu and Nashetania’s knowledge could prove useful.

“Here,” Mora said and opened an iron door in the center room of the temple.

On the other side was a staircase leading downward, with a handrail courteously attached to the wall. There were also light gems in lamps installed along the path going down the stairs. Of course there weren’t many so the path was dim, but it was sufficient for them to see where they were stepping.

When they reached the entrance to the labyrinth they left some of Chamo’s Jyuma behind as a precaution and then ran through the labyrinth with its stone paths and sturdy brick walls. By Mora’s direction they went up another group of stairs then descended again.

“This is bad. It is quite complicated. Mora-san, do you know the way?” Dozzu asked.

“It’s not a problem. I’ve already found the shortest route to the center room.”

“Tgurneu created a nuisance of a place. If you weren’t here, Mora-san, this would be troublesome,” the Kyoma replied.

The underground labyrinth was definitely ridiculously vast. It would probably take an entire day to decently search it all. They were lucky that they had Mora who could use her second sight.

“Dozzu, you knew that the Saint of a Flower was here, didn’t you?” Mora accused as they ran.

“All I knew was the Saint of a Flower was alive and under Tgurneu’s control,” Dozzu replied without any indication that he was hiding anything. “I did not know where she was being held, but it did not seem like she could be anywhere but here since I knew that Tgurneu was doing something here.”

“How did you know that the Saint of a Flower was alive? Was that also thanks to Hayuha?”

“Could there be any other reason?” Dozzu quickly replied.

“Why didn’t you tell us?”

“Because I have no obligation to reveal everything I know.”

“I knew it. So was your intention to use us in order to reach the Saint of a Flower? What in the hell were you intending on doing to her?” Mora asked.

“At the moment our only objective is to reveal Tgurneu’s plans and protect the Six Flowers.”

That’s a lie, Adlet thought as he listened to Dozzu. *There was no way these untrustworthy companions weren’t plotting something. From the beginning Dozzu and Nashetania’s objective had been to use the Six Flowers and get close to the Saint of a Flower.*

So cooperating with the Six Flowers might also be nothing more than a means to that end.

Then, as if she were able to see what Adlet was thinking, Nashetania said, “I want to find the seventh and I want to stop the Black Barren Flower. That is the truth. You don’t need to worry.”

Charging down the shortest path, it took Adlet and the others just the better part of an hour to make their way through the maze. And now in front of them was a thick metal door. Mora didn’t need to say a word for them to realize that this was the door to the center room of the maze. And the door wasn’t locked.

Before they opened it, however, Hans said, “Goldof, Chamo, keep an eye on Dozzu and Nashetania, meow. If they do anything strange let me know.”

Goldof, Chamo, Nashetania, and Dozzu stayed outside the room while the other five quietly entered inside.

“…Huh?”

The room was a massive square about a hundred meters in each direction. Both the walls and the ceiling were covered in white stone and there were no decorations. It was a virtually empty room, except for the center. Everyone’s eyes were drawn to a chair positioned there with what looked like a human sitting on it.

Every aspect of that person was bizarre, to the point that Adlet didn’t even know what he should pay attention to first. The person sitting in the chair had been transformed into a desiccated mummy. Its skin was brown, its thin flesh hung from its bones, and its eye sockets were sunken in.

However, the mummy was strangely dressed up beautifully, wearing a loose white lace dress. Adlet remembered that it was the same type of clothes that the royal family wore as they spectated the battle at the Tournament before the Goddess. The clothes were brand new and didn’t match the old room. Set atop her head, which all of the hair had fallen out of, was an elaborately constructed tiara of artificial flowers. Just a glance was all it took to realize that it was an item of high value.

“Meowhihi, she’s quite fashionable, meow. She is completely different from what I heard.”

According to legend The Saint of a Flower was a woman who had worn simple, modest clothing. She had allegedly dressed in a worn out robe, she hadn’t worn shoes, and she was always wearing a unique mask.

This well-dressed female mummy didn’t seem like the Saint of a Flower.

Adlet moved closer and saw that the mummy’s entire body was in restraints, and he could see that her wrists, ankles, and her entire torso beneath her dress was wrapped in chains. The chains were about as thick as his thumb and appeared terribly deteriorated.

But as Adlet moved to touch the chains, Mora shouted to him, “Don’t carelessly touch those chains. They are a Saint Instrument. I don’t know their effect, but they contain frightening power.”

Adlet withdrew his hand.

“Ughh, that’s gross. What is that? Is that really the Saint of a Flower?” Chamo said, peaking into the room from the door.

“Focus on keeping watch,” Hans scolded her.

The mummy wasn’t the only thing that was strange about the room. Written on the floor around the chair were some words, the meaning of which Adlet couldn’t figure out. However, he had seen those types of words before. They were just like the words that had been written on the stone slab in the temple within the Illusion Fog Barrier. They

were the words that the Saints used when they used one of their skills or created a Saint Instrument – in other words, sacred words.

The words were densely inscribed all about the chair within a five meter radius, and it seemed like the words were also giving off a faint light.

Fremy had only taken one glance at the Saint of a Flower before turning to the sacred words on the floor.

“Is this really the Saint of a Flower?”

“There is reason to conclude that,” Mora replied. “If you observe closely then you would be able to understand that too.”

Hearing Mora’s advice to Fremy, Adlet stared at the mummy.

She was missing a finger on her left hand and she was missing the tips from her pinky, ring, and middle fingers. Supposedly, the Saint of a Flower had lost the fingers of her left hand in a battle. Though the Saint of a Flower could heal wounds with the power of fate, it was said that she couldn’t restore things completely to how they used to be. Similarly she was missing her left ear. The details of how she received that injury had also been passed down in legend. There was also a large cut from her mouth to her chin, which she had received in her battle later on with the Demon King Zophrair. And the bones in her right wrist were slightly warped, a reminder of the time when the Majin’s tentacles had broken it.

All of the many injuries on her body matched the legends of the Saint of a Flower.

“She seems to be the Saint of a Flower to me too. Or she might simply be a corpse that had been injured in the same places that the legends state,” Adlet said.

“What makes you think she’s alive?” Hans asked.

Adlet also had his doubts. Three hours ago they had been fighting with the corpse soldiers who had been dried up and rotting, but nevertheless retained the minimum faculties needed to maintain their lives inside their bodies. But the body in front of them was different. It was definitely a mummy.

“…She is alive. She is breathing and her heart is beating,” Mora said.

However, Adlet was suddenly having a hard time believing that.

“What is this?” Hans asked. “Did this mummy move and get all dressed up? Is that really a mummy?”

“I couldn’t tell you,” Mora replied.

Adlet then walked up in front of the Saint of a Flower.

“Nice to meet you, Saint of the Saint Flower, I guess. I am the Strongest Man in the World, Adlet. As you can see, I am a Hero of the Six Flowers. I have come to seal away the Majin.”

He then waited for a reply, but none came.

“I have something I want to ask. A fake Hero of the Six Flowers appeared. They arrived with a crest that can’t be distinguished from the others and infiltrated our group. With our abilities we don’t know who the impostor is, but you should be able to know.”

The Saint of a Flower didn’t reply. Adlet then gently placed his hand on her back covered in chains.

“Saint of the Single Flower, I’m sorry about this,” he said and then shook her body.

The chains shook and jingled, but the mummy didn’t react in the slightest.

Rolonia and Mora both made their way over to the Saint.

“We should try to heal her. For now it doesn’t seem dangerous to touch her,” Mora said.

Mora’s hand glowed and that light was sucked into the Saint of a Flower’s body. At the same time Rolonia placed her hand on the Saint’s body and tried to manipulate the blood within her. But she soon pulled her hand away.

“….My power is no good. There isn’t a drop of blood left in her body, so I can’t use any of my skills.”

“If that’s the case then isn’t she dead?” Adlet asked.

“Even though she doesn’t have any blood, her heart is beating. Somehow she’s still alive,” Rolonia replied.

“Mora, how’s it going?”

Adlet looked over to Mora. It looked like she was pouring mountain energy into the Saint of a Flower, but there didn’t seem to be any changes to her body. Nevertheless, there was nothing she could do but keep on trying.

“You had anticipated this, meow.”

“Yes.”

The moment Adlet had asked Mora whether the Saint of a Flower was there he had thought that maybe all of the mysteries would be unraveled. The person who had created the crests of the Six Flowers had to know who was the seventh. Adlet had even thought that she might be able to tell them details about the Black Barren Flower.

However, in her current condition it was probably impossible to get any information from her at all.

Why is she here? Why is she wrapped in chains? Why is she dressed in a dress from the latest fashions? And what has Tgurneu done to her?

But most importantly of all, why is she alive? Why did she disappear from the world a thousand years ago without telling a soul?

Finding the Saint of a Flower didn’t unravel any mysteries; rather, Adlet felt the discovery only made the mysteries deeper and deeper.

Mora removed her hand from the Saint of a Flower and shook her head.

“What do you think?” Adlet asked.

“There’s nothing that we can do. Rolonia said it earlier, she is in a state where she shouldn’t be alive.”

“Then why is she alive?”

“The Power of Fate has the ability to prevent undesired futures. In theory, she is virtually omnipotent. It might be possible for her to prevent her future death with the power of Fate and continue to prolong her life.”

Hearing any information from the Saint of a Flower was not an option for the Heroes. All that was left were the sacred words written on the floor.

For a while Fremy had been kneeling on the floor and trying to decipher the writing. Rolonia also had her eyes

focused on the writing.

“Can you two read that?” Adlet asked.

“I’m – I’m sorry….unfortunately I don’t understand it,” Rolonia said.

“There probably isn’t anything you can do, Rolonia. You weren’t taught anything other than fighting and healing. How about you Fremy? Can you make it out?” Mora asked.

“Somewhat. It’s a bit advanced for me and there are a lot of parts I don’t understand. However, I recognize the structure. Look at this section.”

Fremy pointed to a sacred phrase near the center of the floor.

“I think perhaps this is a ritual to take the power from a Saint. Have you ever seen anything like this?”

Mora stared at the writing for a moment.

“It’s the first time I’ve seen a ritual like this… but I figure such a ritual might be able to take the power away from a Saint,” Mora replied.

“Honestly, I was half-dubious about what the corpse soldier had said, but now it seems fairly credible,” Fremy said.

“Let’s continue to decipher the writing. Let’s also get Chamo to help. Rolonia, you take over the lookout.”

“Su-sure.”

Rolonia left the room and Chamo came in. Then the three of them divvied up the writing and went to work trying to figure out what it meant.

“It’s a rare form of sacred writing called sky inscription,” Mora said.

“I wonder who the source of the sky inscription’s power is? Perhaps it’s The Saint of a Flower,” Rolonia replied.

“The writing style itself might actually be a form of the Power of Fate. The fact that all of this is written in this ritualistic language could be the very core of this ritual,” Fremy said.

Adlet and Hans were left out of the conversation as the group of women talked about the sacred words. The two of them couldn’t understand what they were talking about and just looked at one another and shrugged.

“Adlet, Hans. If you have free time then search outside of this room for us. There are a number of suspicious rooms around this one. There may even be some that I can’t find with just my second sight.”

“Ah, understood,” Adlet said, however before he left the room with the Saint of a Flower he asked, “For now let me ask this. Based on what you’ve deciphered so far, what do you know?”

“Roughly, the sacred writing is a ritual that details the functions of a Saint Instrument. You could say that by writing the sacred words the function of the Saint Instrument has been decided. So if we decipher these words then we can understand what kind of Saint Instrument it is,” Fremy replied.

“Then you have to figure it out.”

“I was able to understand that a the Saint Instrument that was made here. Perhaps it was the Black Barren Flower,” Fremy said and then returned to reading the writing.

“Chamo wonders if the Saint of a Flower wrote the writing that’s here,” Chamo said as she turned her eyes to the

writing on the floor.

“No, it was someone else,” Mora replied.

“Why do you think that?” Chamo replied.

“The Saint of a Flower left behind some sacred writing at the Head Temple. However, the writing of the Saint of a Flower was terribly messy and complicated. The writing here is different,” Mora explained.

Could that be true? Adlet wondered. The fabled, legendary Saint of the Single Flower was curiously sounding all too human.

“Well, that’s fine. Let’s go Hans. We’re of no use here,” Adlet responded.

As Adlet started to head out of the room, Hans went over to Mora.

“What’s the matter?” Mora asked.

“I just want to say be careful of Dozzu, meow,” Hans whispered back.

That’s a little strange, Adlet thought. However, he decided not to press the issue.

Next Part

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page
Next Page

Chapter One: Part Three

After he left the room Adlet explained the current situation to Goldof and Rolonia, then told them to keep an eye on Dozzu and Nashetania outside.

“Adlet-san, is there anything we can help you with?” Nashetania asked.

“No. You two just wait there,” Adlet flatly refused. He didn’t want them to do anything.

“You are too cautious of us. There are a lot of things we can cooperate on.”

“That’s not necessary.”

Nashetania shrugged. Adlet then left the two of them there and went to search the many small rooms in the area. He took the east side while Hans moved to the east.

As Mora gave them directions, they searched the nearby rooms. The first one Adlet entered seemed like a resting room. There was a many-legged sofa and a cupboard, a chessboard, and a sugoroku set (1). In addition, there were some basic cooking tools. However, everything was covered in dust; it seemed like the room hadn’t been used for quite a long time.

A slight distance away from that room was what might have been a research area. At the center was a large table, there was a display board on the wall, plus there were a large amount of books. However, it seemed like anything that could serve as a clue had been taken away.

It looked like a large amount of humans and Kyoma had come and gone through the labyrinth. Still, Adlet didn’t have the faintest idea what they had been doing.

Adlet continued his search, but it didn’t feel like he would find anything. He was beginning to think he was searching for nothing. And as those negative thoughts started to grab hold, Fremy’s face appeared in his mind, then what Hans had said filled his head. If the identity of the Black Barren Flower was confirmed now then Hans would probably kill Fremy on the spot.

How should I stop that from happening?

He continued to search while trying to come up with a solution. The next room he entered seemed to have been used by Kyoma. At the center there were several Kyoma corpses and lamps with light gems inside hung from the ceiling.

He didn’t know if he could use this room to execute his plan and he wouldn’t know if he would even need to enact his plan until after Mora and the others had finished their investigation. However if he needed to, then he would have no choice.

“Mora, Mora, can you hear me?”

Adlet waited for a while for Mora’s mountain echoes to reply.

“What’s wrong?”

“You can see there are Kyoma in the room I’m in, right? Can you sense anything moving behind me at the moment? Or are you not able to see that?”

“….Sorry, I’m focusing on deciphering the sacred writing here and I didn’t have time to look over there. However, as far as I can tell from here, there doesn’t seem to be anything happening.”

“…Gotcha. Sorry to disturb you.”

Mora hadn’t been looking inside the room he was in. If that were true then perhaps he would succeed.

About an hour later Mora called to Adlet and told him that the deciphering was complete.

#

Adlet returned to the room where the Saint of a Flower resided and everyone was standing in front of the door. Once Adlet joined the others Mora began to talk.

“…Everyone, I’ll explain what we found, but honestly, the situation isn’t good,” Mora said with a grim look. However just a different facial expression wasn’t enough to worry Adlet.

“First of all, there can be no doubt about it. The one sitting over there is indeed the Saint of a Flower. We know this because part of the sacred writing on the floor states that it is a ritual designed to absorb the power from the Saint of Fate while she is nearby. It is unlikely that the person over there is anyone other than the Saint of a Flower.”

Adlet nodded and listened to the rest of Mora’s explanation.

“And I understand that a Saint Instrument was created from the stolen power. The Saint Instrument that is absorbing the Saint of a Flower’s remaining power…is the Black Barren Flower. The information that corpse soldier gave us wasn’t a lie.”

“As I expected. So, what now?” Adlet replied.

“Rituals are necessary for the creation of the Saint Instruments that possess the greatest power. Any kind of ability the Saint Instrument would possess is clearly defined and written down in Sacred Writing and then its effect becomes a reality. So it’s possible to figure out the abilities and the form it is in by reading that ritual. At the moment we’ve roughly been able to get a grasp on the Black Barren Flower’s power.”

“That’s strange, meow,” Hans said. “If people would know the abilities of a Saint Instrument by reading the sacred writing then why wouldn’t Tgurneu get rid of the writing? I don’t get why he would even need it to be written here? Wouldn’t it be a problem if it were found?”

“I suppose an explanation is needed. Well, first of all once sacred Words are written they cannot be removed. If they are removed then it would also affect the Saint Instrument. The Saint Instrument would start to malfunction and then its effect would cease to work.”

“So, are you saying that if we destroy this writing we’ll be able to stop the Black Barren Flower?”

“You can’t do that either. This is free-script sacred writing, a special writing style. You can think of the characters inked here as having the power of the gods themselves. There is no way they can be destroyed.”

“Umeow….”

Adlet picked up from where Hans left off with a question of his own. “But why did Tgurneu write the words here?

There have to be places that are harder to find."

"With this ritual it's feasible to steal the power of the Saint of a Flower. If it wasn't written where the Saint of a Flower was located than it would have no effect. Tgurneu probably had no other choice but to write the ritual here."

"I see….got it. Can you continue your story?"

"Yeah," Mora took a moment to search for a way to continue her explanation. "Still, all of the details about the Black Barren Flower haven't been written here. The ritual has been split into two. The core of the ritual has been written here and the rest of it is written somewhere else. I tried to find the rest of the ritual with my second sight, but it is not within this temple. The creator of the Black Barren Flower… Tgurneu and his followers are concealing the details of the Black Barren Flower on purpose."

"What a pain in the neck. What should we do?" Hans asked with a sigh.

Mora continued, "First of all, let me tell you about what we have concluded from what was written here. Everything that the corpse soldier Rolonia helped said was true."

"Oh, right…."

A slight jolt went through Adlet's body. Somewhere in his heart Adlet had wanted Raina's words to have been a lie. If they were then it wouldn't be necessary to kill Fremy.

"The Black Barren Flower is absorbing the power of the crest of the Six Flowers. No, more accurately, something might be making the Saint Instrument absorb the energy of the crests. We were able to read that the Black Barren Flower is absorbing something and that it is being forced to absorb it."

"That's not clear at all," Adlet replied.

"I'll talk about it later, but there are also a lot of things that I don't understand. But what is certain is that as long as the Black Barren Flower exists our crests will be losing their power. Everyone other than Fremy will die and if that happens then it wouldn't matter if Fremy is still alive because she would be unable to harm The Majin on her own."

"The princess as well?" They were the first words Goldof had contributed to the conversation.

"Will the princess'… crest… also disappear? Will… her life… be in danger?"

"I don't know," Mora replied. "The very nature of Nashetania's crest is unprecedented. I can't say at this moment what would happen to it. Similarly, it is also uncertain what would happen to the crest that the Seventh possesses."

Nashetania turned to Goldof. "Without the crest I cannot survive in the Wailing Demon Territory either. Only Tgurneu's followers have the ability to make humans survive in the Wailing Demon Territory."

"That's enough about Nashetania. A more important question is when the crests will disappear. Just how much time do we have left?" Adlet asked.

"The answer depends on to what degree the Black Barren Flower is draining the power of the crests," Mora replied. "Unfortunately the Black Barren Flower is definitely active. The sacred writing here indicates that's the case. If it hadn't been activated then the sacred writing wouldn't be glowing."

"And the longer the Black Barren Flower is active, the more its power will grow. The Black Barren Flower is diverting the power it absorbs to itself and is becoming stronger as it absorbs more power from the crests."

"So as it gets closer to the Majin…no, more accurately, when it gets close to the barrier that is sealing away the Majin the Black Barren Flower's effect will increase even more."

“Why?” Adlet asked Mora.

“Originally the crests of the Six Flowers were a part of the barrier that sealed away the Majin. When the Crests of the Six Flowers, the Black Barren Flower, and the barrier to seal the Majin are all gathered into one place, the Black Barren Flower will begin to absorb power from the barrier. A large amount of power from the barrier to seal the Majin would pour into the Black Barren Flower and the Saint Instrument would get so strong that the power of the crests would start to fade.”

“In other words…”

“Perhaps if we get close to the Valley of Fallen Tears…we will all die before we even realized what was happening.”

Adlet’s spine grew rigid. If they hadn’t decided to head to the temple or if they hadn’t been able to meet up with Dozzu and Nashetania it would have been the end for Adlet and the others.

Even the easygoing Hans seemed disturbed by the revelation. “We were lucky,” he said.

“There is just one piece of good news. If doesn’t matter if the Black Barren Flower gets close to the Majin alone since it can only gain power while near the crests of the Six Flowers. If it isn’t near the crests then it cannot absorb power from the barrier that is sealing the Majin.”

Adlet and the others felt slightly relieved. At the very least, as long as the Six Flowers didn’t get close to the Majin then it seemed like they would be alright.

“There is one more thing we figured out. It seems that no one other than Tgurneu can activate the Black Barren Flower. Perhaps that was a precaution against Cargikk and Dozzu’s plans,” Mora said.

“Tgurneu would probably do something like that. He doesn’t trust anyone other than himself,” Dozzu said.

“So, there are problems no matter what we do,” Mora replied. “We can’t escape this danger and if the Black Barren Flower is already near us then soon our crests will disappear.”

“In the worst case scenario it might be necessary to split into two groups. Raina said the Black Barren Flower cannot activate its power if it’s not near the Six Flowers. If we split into two groups then one group would be able to escape the Saint Instrument’s effect,” Adlet suggested.

However, Mora’s face clouded upon hearing Adlet’s idea. And instead of Mora who seemed to be struggling to find the right words to say, Fremy began to talk.

“…That’s also impossible. The instant the Black Barren Flower activates it needs to be near us. But, if it activates once then even if we distance ourselves from it the Saint Instrument will continue to absorb our energy. Granted the speed of absorption would be far slower, but the effect itself would not cease.”

“Are you saying that though we’d be able to lessen the damage….it wouldn’t stop altogether?”

This is real bad, Adlet thought. Until then he had thought that even though Fremy was the Black Barren Flower, if he were to keep her from acting on her own then there wouldn’t be any problems. But now it was clear that wasn’t a viable solution.

The others looked grim, and not just the Flowers, but also Nashetania and Dozzu. Up till that point they had thought that if they knew about the true identity of the Black Barren Flower it would be possible to deal with it. However, there was a chance that it was already too late.

“There are a number of ways to stop it,” Fremy said. “First of all, just like with the other Saint Instruments, we can

stop the person who activated it first. We would need to kill them. I even said that when we were dealing with the Illusion Fog Barrier. After that person was killed then we would need to break the Saint Instrument itself. However, there is also something a bit troubling about this idea."

"What's that?" Adlet replied.

"It's one of the curious rituals inscribed on the floor. It reads that when the Black Barren Flower is destroyed some kind of function that had been stopped up until that point would be activated."

"…What kind of function?"

"The specifics weren't written."

"Isn't that really bad? Are you saying that it may even be dangerous to destroy the Black Barren Flower?"

"That is not the case," Fremy replied. "Certainly among the Saint Instruments there are those that would activate some function on the condition that they are destroyed. However, if the source of the Saint Instrument's power is destroyed then its effect won't be able to come about. It wouldn't be able to activate its great power even for a moment. What exactly will happen is unknown, but it's hard to believe that things would be more dangerous for us if the Black Barren Flower continues to exist after we've destroyed the source of its power. "

Nevertheless, it was necessary to be cautious, Adlet felt.

"I'll talk about what wasn't written," Fremy said. "First of all, as Mora said something might happen if the Saint Instrument is broken."

"In addition to that is one more thing. We know that the Black Barren Flower is a Saint Instrument that has been imbued with some kind of power, but any information as to why it was made and what kind of shape it was made into has been hidden away. Tgurneu must have feared that information being revealed more than anything else."

"This is terrible. Even though that is possibly the most important information we've heard…" Nashetania said, showing a rare frown. The others were thinking the same way as she was, though Adlet, Hans, and Rolonia knew the identity of the Black Barren Flower.

Adlet was torn over whether to tell everything to his companions. However, he couldn't put off the decision as something he could settle another day. Adlet looked over to Hans and Rolonia who were listening to the conversation quietly, but neither one of them seemed like they would say anything.

"Also we don't know just how much time it will take for the crests to go away. This isn't because it isn't written, it's because it depends on what happened after the Black Barren Flower was activated," Fremy added.

"You don't have any idea where the remaining portion of the ritual is?" Adlet asked.

"It's not that we completely have no idea. We know that the remaining sacred writing was written with what is called insect ritual script." Fremy said.

"What's that?"

"Sacred writing carved with a very small stake… it's small enough to fit in your hand, about the side of a bracelet or a block of wood. The remaining writing was written with this tool and is being housed somewhere," Fremy said.

"It's somewhere in this massive Wailing Demon Territory…," Adlet said.

"Finding such a thing is impossible," Nashetania added.

Silence fell among the companions. Then suddenly Dozzu and Fremy both began to speak at the same time. Fremy then beckoned for Dozzu to go first.

“Excuse me. Would it be alright if I said something?”

“What is it, Dozzu?” Adlet snapped.

“We also know a number of things.”

The Heroes were shocked and Adlet looked at Rolonia and Goldof in protest. He had told them to keep an eye on Nashetania and Dozzu and make sure they didn’t do anything.

“Please do not worry. We will not act on our own. We just wanted to verify that the Saint of a Flower was here.

“First of all, the Saint of a Flower was not imprisoned here by Tgurneu.”

“What do you mean?”

“She has been here for a long time. After her whereabouts became unknown she made a giant hole here and sealed herself within it.”

“…How do you know this?”

“Because of the chair the Saint of a Flower is sitting in and the chains that are wrapped about her body. They are both Saint Instruments that the Saint of a Flower herself made a thousand years ago.”

Adlet was a bit surprised by that news.

“Both of them are extremely powerful Saint Instruments. For starters, the chair has the power to change this room into a barrier. Humans or Kyoma, it doesn’t matter, they cannot enter into this room. And even if someone happened to discover the room, it would immediately disappear from their memories.”

“But we entered the room.”

“The Saint Instrument has stopped working. Perhaps it was stopped by Tgurneu’s hand,” Dozzu replied and then continued his explanation.

“The chains wrapped about the Saint of a Flower were also created by the Saint herself. The person bound in those chains cannot escape no matter what kind of technique they employ, nor could they be moved from this place. At the same time, the person who had been bound by those chains could not be harmed by any means.”

“Why do you know this?”

“Because we…Hayuha, Cargikk, Tgurneu and I saw it. We saw the Saint of a Flower secretly constructing these Saint Instruments somewhere that no one could find her.”

“…”

“At the time we had not understood for what purpose she had created the Saint Instruments. There were not any enemies powerful enough to require such tools. However, now I understand. The Saint of a Flower had made them with the purpose of binding herself.”

Adlet stared at the Saint of a Flower. She had a terribly strange appearance.

“After defeating the Majin 1000 years ago, the Saint of a Flower’s whereabouts became unknown. She secretly dug this hole into the ground and created this room. Then she wrapped herself in chains,” Dozzu reiterated.

“I don’t get why,” Adlet replied. “So, you’re telling us that the Saint of a Flower confined herself?”

“That is correct,” he confirmed.

“The chains weren’t stolen by a Kyoma or some enemy of hers?”

“That is not likely. There should not be any being in this world that can confine the Saint of a Flower. Even if all the Kyoma from that era joined forces it would probably be impossible.”

“But what’s the point of all of it… why would she do such a thing?” Adlet muttered.

“Perhaps Tgurneu used the Saint Instruments Hayuha left behind and identified the Saint of a Flower’s location. Tgurneu then used some method to break the barrier and entered the room. Then he stole the power from the Saint of a Flower and constructed the Black Barren Flower. There is not any proof of this, but it does not seem to be far from the truth.”

Adlet didn’t sense any deceit in Dozzu’s voice. He then looked through the cracks in the door and glanced at the Saint of a Flower.

She was far more full of mysteries than he had anticipated. Allegedly she had confined herself and she had fallen under Tgurneu’s control. Yet neither of those theories made any sense.

“There is something that I can surmise from the results of Mora-san and the other’s investigation. Someone among you possesses the crest of the seventh. But that was not created by Tgurneu, but the Saint of a Flower herself.”

“Tgurneu stole power from the Saint of a Flower and, if that were used to create the seventh crest then it should be written here. However, the writing here only details the Black Barren Flower. I cannot think of the creator of the seventh crest being anyone other than the Saint of a Flower.”

Mora seemed to remember something and spoke to the group, “Tgurneu had said the same thing. The seventh crest had been made by the Saint of a Flower and had been given to fulfill Tgurneu’s plans. So it sounds like what he said was true.”

Dozzu nodded and continued his explanation. “However the Saint of a Flower was able to create the seventh crest completely unbeknownst to myself, Hayuha, and the others. I do not have any idea as to why she did it.”

If that were the case then what was the purpose of the seventh crest? Who in the world was the seventh? They had acquired more information, but the mystery was only getting deeper.

“Tgurneu is using the seventh’s crest… however the seventh’s crest itself was created by the Saint of a Flower…” Mora placed her hands on her head in thought.

“If that’s the case then the seventh’s crest itself might not harm us,” Adlet said. “Actually, the reality could be that it might help us. Tgurneu may be using the crest, but what he stole had originally been intended for us.”

“That is possible,” Dozzu replied.

“Until now I had simply thought that we would kill the seventh if we found them,” Mora started. “But, that might have the opposite effect and invite even more danger. Wouldn’t our situation get worse after we kill the seventh and the seventh’s crest disappears?”

“Meow, but that would also present a problem for us. The seventh is an enemy that Tgurneu sent to infiltrate our group. We cannot leave them be.”

“Then that means it’s alright to hurt them as long as we don’t kill then. So Chamo’ll tear off both of their hands and pluck out both of their eyes. They won’t be able to do anything. If Chamo does that then there’ll be no danger of the seventh’s crest disappearing,” Chamo replied to Hans.

“Meow, that certainly is true. You’re smart, Chamo.”

“Hehehe.”

The two of them were having a good time chatting about torture but Adlet had no interest in such an action.

“Well there’s nothing we can do to identify the seventh… but we should probably keep their presence in mind. Though I admit it is difficult to skillfully take precautions against an unknown,” Mora said.

The companions all nodded in agreement. However, there was one part that Adlet still wasn’t convinced about. *If the seventh’s crest was something that made its owner into an ally of the Six Flowers then why had the Saint of a Flower hidden it?*

In fact, is the Saint of a Flower really their ally? If she isn’t then what in the world are the Heroes of the Six Flowers?

It seemed like Dozzu was going to continue his story, but this time his voice seemed a bit less confident.

“There is still one more thing. This is not something I can call an inference. It is actually nothing more than a guess, however…”

“I don’t care. Talk,” Adlet said.

“Perhaps Tgurneu possesses the ability to control the minds of humans and make them follow his orders.”

Didn’t you think that was unbelievably important information to share? Adlet wondered

“There are two pieces of proof. First of all, there was something strange about the humans that he had made into his followers. Most humans who followed his commands and monitored their peers were being threatened, deceived, or coerced. However, there are a small number of them who have displayed an absolute loyalty towards Tgurneu.”

“…So?”

“It is a truly small number. I looked into it and there are only about one or two. However, those humans possess the utmost level of knowledge regarding Sacred Writing and they could have been at the center of the testing.”

“That alone is not proof.”

“There is one more thing, and that is the barrier that the Saint of a Flower created. This barrier is not something that could be penetrated with mediocre power. There are not any Saints or Kyoma who could do it. Even if Tgurneu and I put all of our knowledge about Sacred Writing together it does not seem like we would be able to get through it.”

“In fact I could not think of any way to break through the barrier… besides receiving the method from the Saint of a Flower herself.”

“In other words, the Saint of a Flower is being controlled by Tgurneu. Is that what you’re saying?”

“I wonder if that is the case. However I do not know how long he has manipulated her or what he forced her to do.”

It was hard to believe. The Saint of a Flower was the most important being in the fight to protect the world. If Tgurneu was manipulating her then the world was really over.

“However, at the moment the world is not over. The Heroes of the Six Flowers were properly chosen. Even I do not

understand what that could mean. Is it because perhaps Tgurneu was not able to control the Saint of a Flower completely…or is it because of some other reason?"

"So the seventh is also being manipulated by Tgurneu, meow?"

"…That may be the case. Or it might not be. I cannot say."

It was certainly possible that the seventh was being controlled by Tgurneu, but that wasn't the only possibility. The seventh, Tgurneu's ability to control others, and the seventh's crest. It seemed like the Heroes' situation was just getting progressively more complicated.

As those thoughts rushed about Adlet's mind, Fremy began to speak.

"I also have something I want to say, but…"

Since he'd been absorbed in Dozzu's explanation, he'd completely forgotten, but Fremy had seemed like she wanted to say something for some time. However, everything related to the Black Barren Flower should have already been discussed. What does she plan on saying?"

"What's the matter? There shouldn't be anything else we know. Did you think of something?" Mora asked.

It doesn't seem like it'll be very important, Adlet thought.

"Yes. I'm thinking just one thing. Based on everything we've concluded I will say this."

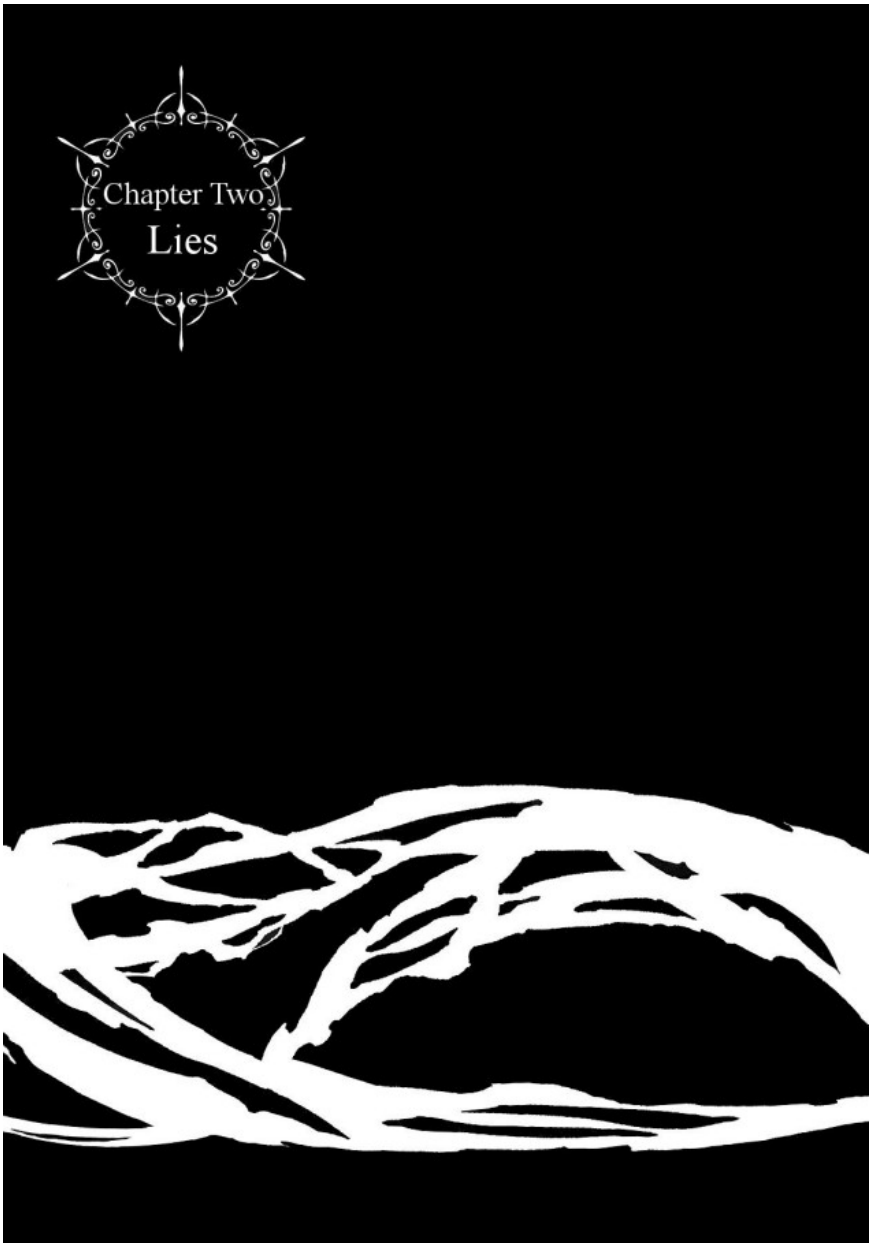
The next instant Fremy said something that made Adlet's heart jump up into his throat.

"I think I'm the Black Barren Flower."

Next Page

(1) Two types of Japanese board games either similar to backgammon or Chutes and Ladders.

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel



Chapter Two: Part One

Somehow… it looks like she survived.

There was a single Kyoma in the labyrinth, and his body was metamorphosing. His skin changed to the same color and pattern as the flagstone beneath him and he flattened down to the floor like a carpet. Then in that new form he quietly slid across the ground.

He had the ability to camouflage himself. He wasn't able to completely make himself disappear like Dark Specialist Number 26, so if someone was nearby and looked closely they would probably be able to see through his camouflage easily.

However, Mora, who at the moment was using her second sight to look through the temple, still hadn't noticed him.

The Temple Labyrinth was vast and it was impossible even for her to know every inch of it.

When he removed his camouflage he would revert to the appearance of a white lizard. He was the Kyoma who had issued orders to the others in order to lure Adlet into a trap and on the way to the temple he had reverted back to his base form, appearing in front of Fremy and Adlet in the process.

The Kyoma went by the name of Dark Specialist Number 30. He was one of the Kyoma whose abilities Tgurneu deemed acceptable enough to warrant being bestowed with a number. Tgurneu approved of his clandestine skills and his ability to gather information, but what Tgurneu acknowledged above all else was his intelligence. He didn't just follow Tgurneu's orders unconditionally; he thought for himself and was able to take actions that he believed would fulfill Tgurneu's objectives. While many Kyoma were terrible at such independent thinking, he excelled at it.

Shit… Am I the only one who survived?

Of all the Kyoma that had been left to protect the Temple, everyone except for Number 30 had been wiped out. The Kyoma that had originally taken command ordered everyone to sacrifice themselves in a charge against the enemy, and after that Kyoma fell Number 30 took command.

He deployed the Kyoma, set the trap, and tried to stop the Six Flowers. He had even been able to go so far as to seriously injure Adlet. However, in the end it had been useless.

He abandoned his followers and ran away by himself. And, he was forced to watch as all of the Kyoma around the temple were wiped out while he used his camouflage ability to slip past Mora's watch. He then snuck into the temple through the cracks in the door before the Flowers had arrived and he had been hiding ever since.

"There are a number of ways to stop it. First of all, just like with the other Saint Instruments, we can stop the person who activated it first. We would need to kill them; I even said that when we were dealing with the Illusion Fog Barrier. After that person was killed then we would need to break the Saint Instrument itself. However, there is also something a bit troubling about this idea."

As he clung to the floor, Number 30 could hear the Six Flowers' conversation.

Number 30 had another ability besides his camouflage. His entire body was a listening apparatus and so he could hear several hundred times better than humans. If they spoke in their normal voice anywhere within the labyrinth, he would have no difficulty picking up everything they said.

"Number 30…. what are the Six Flowers doing?" said a tiny voice beside him. It belonged to another Kyoma.

He was Dark Specialist Number 14, his superior in rank. Apparently he had received information half a day ago that the Six Flowers were nearing the temple, and so he came here. However, he didn't come to provide backup in the fight, he had just been waiting inside.

"Just as we talked about earlier. Nothing has changed. They have gathered in front of the room at the center of the labyrinth and are investigating what is there. They are talking about the Saint of the Single Flower, the Black Barren Flower, and Tgurneu's ultimate weapon."

"The Black Barren Flower….what in the world is that? I've never heard of it before." The two Kyoma were talking so quietly that Mora wouldn't be able to detect their conversation.

They had been ordered by Tgurneu to protect this temple; that was all. They didn't know who the seventh was. And though the topic sometimes entered the Six Flowers' conversation, the two Kyoma had no idea what the Black Barren Flower was. In fact, they only knew that the Saint of the Single Flower was in the temple because of what they heard from the Six Flowers earlier.

Tgurneu was extremely secretive. He didn't convey anything other than the most limited of information to his Kyoma subordinates. All he needed was for them to follow his orders; the Kyoma weren't permitted to think about the logic or meaning behind them. That was Tgurneu's policy.

Eventually they would receive orders from Tgurneu. So until then the two had just been waiting.

"It's not that we completely have no idea. We know that the remaining sacred writing was written with what is called insect ritual script."

That was Fremy, someone whose voice Number 30 hadn't heard in a long time. Her words resonated through his body and made him recall something that had happened a little over an hour ago.

Foolish girl. Are you still… hesitating to kill me?

Number 30 had lived with Fremy in the past; in fact, he'd been one of the family members that raised her.

#

It was eighteen years ago. Number 30 still hadn't received a number and was just another one of the insignificant Kyoma, so he was extremely shocked when all of a sudden Tgurneu called to him.

After finishing their obligatory seasonal greetings, Tgurneu spoke. "I have to give you a fairly difficult order. It necessitates cleverness, acting skill, and the ability to understand the human heart. And you are the only one of my followers whom I can trust with this."

Tgurneu guided him to a small cave where Dark Specialist Number 6 was living. Even among Tgurneu's subordinates, she held an extremely special position. Both her abilities and her responsibilities were kept an absolute secret.

Beside Number 6 was an infant Kyoma only several months old. It was a strange Kyoma that looked very similar to humans and was terribly ugly.

Tgurneu ordered Number 6 to leave the cave and then he began to explain to Number 30.

That baby Kyoma was named Fremy Speeddraw. Hearing that name Number 30 had another reason to feel uneasy about the child. It was the highest honor for a Kyoma to receive a unique name; it irritated him that a Kyoma that was only several months old had been granted that honor.

And wasn't it the custom of the detestable humans to give a child a meaningless surname after their individual name? He had thought in disgust.

"This child was born from a human and a Kyoma so her mind probably has the same level of sophistication as a human's. Now, I have some orders I'd like to give you. The first is: I'd like you to raise this child to be a strong Kyoma. Raise her to the point where within twenty years she could fight against me by herself."

That's impossible, Number 30 thought, but didn't say. If Tgurneu ordered it then it was possible.

"The other order is: I'd like you to make her hate the Kyoma when she has fully come of age.

But just simple hatred isn't enough. I need her to hate the Kyoma so much that even at the risk of losing her life she would still feel the need to kill them. That is the level of hatred you must foster within her."

The order stated Number 30 had to raise the child to be the strongest Kyoma among Tgurneu's subordinates and then he had to make that child hate the Kyoma. It was difficult to understand to reasoning behind such an order, however Number 30 didn't ask any questions back.

“The truth is I had planned on having Number 6 over there carry out these orders. But she has gotten strange. I was the one who ordered her to love this child, but Number 6 has grown to love the child too much. It’s to the point where she has forgotten about my orders or even her loyalty to the Majin.”

Tgurneu sighed. Then Fremy, who was on the bed, looked at Number 30 crawling on the floor and began to laugh. Tgurneu gently picked up the baby and rocked her.

“Well, what will you do if I give you these orders? How will you make this child strong and how will you make her hate the Kyoma?”

Staring at Tgurneu rocking the baby, Number 30 thought quietly for a moment. He had also participated in the task of controlling the human cattle so he also understood their mentality.

“First of all, I will make this child love the Kyoma. Then I’ll make her work hard to become strong for the benefit of the Kyoma. Then I will brutally betray her. And after that she will have no choice but to detest the Kyoma.”

Tgurneu clapped his hands in joy.

“Right, that’s it. I have been searching for a Kyoma who could give me such an answer – it’s the exact same strategy that I had thought of.”

Tgurneu made a cruel smile and even Number 30, who had pledged his loyalty to him, trembled in fear.

“You can do it right?”

Number 30 nodded.

#

Around the time he received that responsibility, the Kyoma was given the name and number of a Dark Specialist. After that when Fremy was not present he was called Number 30.

Number 30 was given two subordinates. They both possessed the same kind of cleverness and linguistic ability as Number 30 did. However, only Number 30 was the one who issued orders. One Kyoma was a red ant and the other went by the name of the Piercing Bird. The three of them had the duty of acting as Fremy’s family and they were to pretend to love her.

As for Number 6, who should have been discarded as unnecessary, Number 30 requested that she be spared and his request was granted – he had been given that level of authority. Then Number 30 took in Number 6 as his subordinate. *Even a Kyoma that truly loved Fremy, instead of just pretending to, could be important*, he thought.

After that another Kyoma, the dog that had been given by Tgurneu, started to live with Fremy. When she was an infant laying her giant dog on the ground, burying her head in its stomach and rolling around was her favorite way of having fun.

The four Kyoma raised Fremy in a cave in the corner of the Wailing Demon Territory. Until she learned how to talk, they helped her in the same way that humans would. Back then Fremy had been a noisy child and she was always laughing. And from what they read in the books on child rearing they’d procured from the human world she was somehow more lively than an ordinary human child.

The four Kyoma enthusiastically raised Fremy, but whereas Number 30 and his two subordinates felt like vomiting from the repulsive work, raising Fremy seemed to genuinely make Number Six happy.

Then Fremy turned three and Number 30’s work began.

#

The first thing he gave her was fear.

He took Fremy out of the cave and introduced her to the other Kyoma. When the others first saw Fremy they felt like killing and eating her. They would shout with hatred and look at her with drool streaming from their open mouths. Meanwhile, Number 30 would watch all of this from the shadows, hidden from sight.

And though at first Fremy had thought that they would play with her, soon she realized the reality. Even though she was still young, she could understand the fear of death and the fact that she was utterly unloved by the other Kyoma. The powerless Fremy sank to the ground and stared at the Kyoma baring their tusks and preparing to the run through her body.

That fear buried so deeply into the center of her heart that she would never forget it for as long as she lived.

In the end Number 30 headed over to help her.

"…What are you all doing to this Kyoma that was born by Master Tgurneu's command?"

Number 30 used his mouth to pick up Fremy, who was utterly speechless from fear, and brought her back to her room. After that she was terrified to even leave her room again.

Of course everything had been a part of Number 30's plan. Then again, even if he hadn't done anything the same thing would have probably happened.

The next thing he gave to Fremy was anger.

The Kyoma that managed the cattle surrounded the cave where Fremy lived and shouted at her. Of course Number 30 was letting them do that. He couldn't forget that he needed to remove any chances that the truth would be revealed.

"As a human child, make her work like the human cattle. Make her dig holes and pile up rocks. She must be made to make babies and then her babies will be fed to us. No, she should be fed to us directly."

Number 6 and Number 30 both refused saying that they were raising Fremy as Tgurneu ordered so they couldn't meet the Kyoma's demands.

And then the other Kyoma attacked Fremy's family.

All of the members in Fremy's family had low fighting abilities so they were tormented: chewed up relentlessly, stabbed and pierced by tusks and teeth.

Trembling in fear, Fremy watched her family suffer as she hid in the corner of the cave. And after that a smile never touched Fremy's lips. In fact, after she turned five Number 30 couldn't remember ever seeing her smile.

#

During that time Number 30 and his two Kyoma subordinates continued to pretend and love Fremy.

She was a child that never cried. Instead her lips just trembled as she clenched her teeth and endured the suffering.

"Why do they hate me?" Fremy asked sadly.

"It's because you look like a human. It can't be helped," Number 30 replied and embraced the child.

"So then why was I born looking like a human?"

“Master Tgurneu ordered so.”

“But the other Kyoma still hate me. Master Tgurneu is cruel. Why won’t he tell everyone to like me?”

When Fremy asked that Number 30 slapped her across the face.

“Master Tgurneu is preparing for the fight with the Six Flowers. He is fighting to annihilate the humans. Master Tgurneu does not live for you. You exist for Master Tgurneu.”

“But,” Fremy said, “Everyone got hurt because of me. I can’t stand that. I want to be thrown in with the cattle if any of you are hurt any more. If that would make the other Kyoma stop being mean to you then it would be okay with me.

Hearing those words made Number 30 chuckle in his mind.

Fear and anger robbed her of her love. The more enemies there were, the stronger her thought to protect her allies became. Just as Tgurneu had predicted, love was growing within Fremy’s heart, even though it was just being created so that one day they could betray her.

“It’s painful for us and it’s painful to see our precious Fremy suffer. But, we can endure. So you can too.”

Number 6 and the other companion Kyoma gently nestled close to Fremy, and she hugged her mother and fell quiet.

Her dog went over to Fremy’s side as she struggled to hold back tears. Perhaps he misunderstood and thought that she was crying so he licked Fremy’s face. But that was when Fremy noticed that the dog had also been injured by the Kyoma.

“I want to become strong,” she announced in a heartbroken voice, as if choking on blood or sobs. “I want to be able to look those Kyoma in the eye. If I become strong then no one will be mean to any of you again.”

Things are going so well, it’s scary, Number 30 thought in response.

#

When she was six Fremy was given her first gun, and before long she was told about the plan to turn her into a Saint. At that time Number 30 remembered how her body trembled with excitement and delight.

After that Fremy desperately studied how to use the gun and worked on her fighting skills.

The four Kyoma of the family helped with her training. Each day was brutal. On the days it seemed like she was exhausted she would be mercilessly showered with insults. And there were even times when she was chased out of the house for complaining. At those times her only comfort was her dog.

However, Fremy endured each harsh day of training. Even Number 30 knew that the trials they were putting the small child through were extremely cruel, but such a thought was inconsequential.

Meanwhile, Tgurneu made the human slaves build a Temple of Gunpowder. And when the temple needed to choose a new Saint, Fremy was successfully chosen at the age of 12. Perhaps Fremy was the only Saint of Gunpowder in all of history.

“I will become strong. I will become stronger than everyone and I’ll beat them all. I will never let them hurt any of you ever again,” Fremy said and gripped her gun.

#

Perhaps as a Saint Fremy's talents were nothing special, and as a Kyoma her physical strength was close to the lowest of all. However, Fremy wanted to triumph over the other Kyoma, protect her family, and to that end she strove to become stronger with every ounce of her willpower. If she had been accepted by the Kyoma then she would have been raised as an average Kyoma and would probably not have become anything other than a Saint with ordinary strength. The reason she was able to become strong was thanks to both her hatred and her love.

Before long Fremy covertly entered the human world and started to kill Six Flowers candidates. Asley the Saint of Ice and Matra the expert archer; she hunted those that would probably pose a significant threat if left alive.

Soon, there were even those among the Kyoma that began to recognize her achievements. Opinions like: *Fremy was a legitimate Kyoma, the Kyoma that had tried to exclude her had been mistaken, and Master Tgurneu's keen insight to birth her wasn't suspicious,* started to circulate among the Kyoma.

But that was slightly troubling because Fremy didn't hate the Kyoma and that had been Number 30's most important task.

Each time a Kyoma who had one of those opinions showed up Number 30 prohibited them from saying those kinds of things in front of Fremy. That was what Tgurneu wanted so it had to be strictly enforced.

Eventually Fremy started to grow discouraged. No matter how many successes piled up, she was never acknowledged by the Kyoma. She began to wonder if she would forever be considered a monster who would never be seen by the Kyoma as one of their own.

Since Number 30 had raised Fremy, he understood very clearly that she wanted to be recognized as a genuine Kyoma and accepted. And it wasn't for her own benefit, but for the benefit of her family. If she could do that then she believed that her family would definitely be happy.

Number 30 trampled upon that hope.

As a half-breed she would never be accepted by the Kyoma. And gradually Fremy started to give up on even trying to win their approval.

Nevertheless, Fremy never lost her fighting spirit. It didn't matter if the other Kyoma wouldn't accept her. The only truth she knew was that her mother, Number 30, and even the two Kyoma that lived with her loved her.

In Fremy's mind she had thought that if it would save her family then she didn't need to live.

#

Eventually the time they had planned for years ago was finally on the horizon and once again Tgurneu summoned Number 30.

"Incredible. Number 30, your work is surpassing even my expectations," he said.

"I like to look at the faces of humans. I like to look at the faces of those who are suffering. However, just them suffering isn't enough to satisfy me. I love watching the faces of those who are worrying, confused, and seeking answers."

Tgurneu smiled as he reminisced.

"Fremy had a wonderful face. It was an exquisite mix of hatred and love. And although she was filled with agony, humiliation, and despair, she still clung to the bond she had with all of you. Should I hate the Kyoma, or should I love them? She's so torn that she has no idea what to do."

It didn't feel like Tgurneu was actually praising Number 30 though.

"You did good work for me. You've shown me something great."

Suddenly Number 30 started to entertain doubts about Tgurneu's current state of affairs. Tgurneu tormented the Kyoma that followed him. At first Number 30 had believed that had only been for the sake of the Majin and the Kyoma as a whole. However, Number 30 was starting to wonder if perhaps Tgurneu had no deeper purpose and just liked to see the faces of people in pain.

The other Kyoma commander Cargikk, he loved the Kyoma deeply. He called them his children and he struggled and fought right alongside them.

Perhaps I was wrong to serve Tgurneu.

Number 30 shook away his doubts. Cargikk's kindness was not what they needed for victory. What they needed was Tgurneu's ingenuity and heartlessness.

"Now Fremy is heading to kill Chamo Rosso. Of course she is going to lose and when she comes back will be the time we have been waiting for." Tgurneu smiled.

"Of course, I'll be present to witness what happens. Ah, it will be fun."

#

Betray Fremy and hurt her. That was his final task.

Since Number 6 loved Fremy from the bottom of her heart, Number 30 had to remind her in detail how important this final task was to their plan.

Number 30 told Number 6 that Fremy would only hate them temporarily. Eventually Tgurneu's plan would be revealed and Fremy would be welcomed among the Kyoma. Then she would truly join the Kyoma brethren. Since Number 6 was a fool, she believed that.

Number 30 loyally executed the finishing touches on their plan. After Fremy lost and returned home, he tormented her, injured her, and shattered her hope.

And as he did so, Tgurneu stared on happily.

Even now Number 30 remembered what Fremy's face looked like when her family had betrayed her: it went completely blank. It was the face of someone who had lost all emotion.

The Kyoma attacked Fremy. Though they had been strictly ordered not to kill her, not a word had been said about not hurting her. So Number 30 and the others tortured Fremy's body to their heart's content.

Eventually Fremy managed to escape to the human world and with that Number 30's job was complete.

#

All of Number 30's tasks had been accomplished. As Tgurneu had ordered, Fremy now probably hated the Kyoma with all of her being. However, Number 30 still couldn't figure out why he needed to make that happen.

The piercing bird and the red ant had been killed by Fremy and Number 30 was dismissed from his role as leader and returned to his original role as an underling.

With Fremy gone Number 6 became completely useless and was placed somewhere at the outskirts of the Wailing

Demon Territory. However, she continued to believe that Fremy would one day come back so she carefully protected the dog that Fremy had kept as a pet.

About 5 months after Fremy's disappearance, Number 30 heard that Cargikk's followers attacked Number 6 and killed her, but there was no longer anyone left in the world who cared about that.

As the fight with the Six Flowers drew closer, Tgurneu suddenly appeared and said, "Fremy seems to be living quite terribly. She's being hunted by the humans due to her role as the Six-Flower killer, so she has to run around hiding her true nature, all the while living in hunger, fear, and despair."

"It's good, huh? Incredible, really. The humans are useful after all. I feel like I want to give her pursuers a reward for tormenting her in my stead."

What's so fun about that? Number 30 had no clue what Tgurneu found so amusing.

"I wonder if Fremy gets it now. No one has ever loved her. It will be the most joyous of times when she finally understands that." Tgurneu said and then smiled.

A little after their conversation Fremy, who Number 30 had raised, appeared in the Wailing Demon Territory as an enemy. She had given herself over to the hatred she now felt for Number 30 and was now going about killing Kyoma.

And now she was talking about the Saint of a Flower and the Saint Instrument that became the Black Barren Flower.

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Chapter Two: Part Two

"…Fremy, I didn't hear you. What do you mean?" Mora asked incredulously.

Adlet felt the same as Mora. *How does she know?* he wondered.

For a moment he thought that Hans or Rolonia had told her, but they looked just as shocked as him by Fremy's sudden declaration.

"Since we all gathered together I have been thinking about saying that, but it would have been twice as difficult to explain why earlier," Fremy readily answered.

"You said that you are the Black Barren Flower?" Mora asked.

"My body itself might be the Black Barren Flower, or it might have been inserted somewhere in my body and a part of me is harboring it. I can't decide which is correct, but I know I'm definitely connected to the Black Barren Flower."

"Is that a confession? Have you known about the Black Barren Flower all this time?"

Fremy shook her head. "No. Until Dozzu mentioned it, the phrase 'Black Barren Flower' wasn't even in the recesses of my memory, and I didn't know about the function of the Saint Instrument until I analyzed the Sacred Writing here."

"So then why do you think you're connected to it?" Mora pressed.

"I think I remember coming to this place once."

"I don't get it, what are you talking about?" Adlet asked.

Fremy shot a quick glance at Adlet before continuing.

"Since my explanation wasn't enough for all of you, I'll add this: when a Saint Instrument is created the vessel that will become the Saint Instrument must come into contact with the ritual's sacred writing. The ritual to make the Black Barren Flower was split into more than two parts, but the core of the ritual is written here, so the vessel that would become the Black Barren Flower absolutely must touch this sacred writing once."

"So what? The fact that a Saint Instrument needs to touch the sacred writing doesn't need explaining, right?" Mora said.

"…Sorry. I don't know until it was just explained to me," Adlet replied.

"The first time I entered this place I felt a sense of Deja-Vu. At first I had thought it was my mind playing tricks on me, but while I was looking at the Saint of a Flower my memories came back to me bit by bit. They are nothing but vague memories, but I have seen the Saint of a Flower as she appears now up close before."

"However, even if you say that you've seen her before that isn't enough to conclude that you are the Black Barren Flower," Adlet countered back.

"Tgurneu concealed the existence of the Temple of Fate. I hadn't even heard a rumor of this place. So why was it necessary to bring someone like me here? Why did they show me inside and why did they bring me close to the Saint of a Flower?"

Adlet had no response.

“We still haven’t determined what the Black Barren Flower does, but to me it seems like the most fitting theory is to think of me as the Black Barren Flower.”

“Wait. Mora, before we get ahead of ourselves, is there even a way to turn humans or Kyoma into Saint Instruments?” Adlet asked.

“…There is. Over 500 years ago, one Saint published a way to turn humans into Saint Instruments, but the human died so all the documents detailing how to create such a Saint Instrument were destroyed and the Saint responsible was executed. There shouldn’t be any place on this planet where that method is still known…”

“Why did the person turned into a Saint Instrument die?”

“I don’t know. It isn’t written in the records.”

There’s no longer any room for doubt that Fremy is the Black Barren Flower, Adlet thought. Raina’s words had been confirmed and the chance of there being another girl with white hair and a horn on her head were almost nil.

“Meow. I guess it’s alright now if we reveal everything, meow,” Hans said.

Everyone’s attention went to the assassin.

Adlet tried to say, ‘It’s still too early. Hans, stop this right now.’ But it was no longer necessary to keep their secret. There was nothing he could do to stop the truth from coming out now.

“What happened?”

“Actually, Adlet’s old friend said more. He told us that the Black Barren Flower was in the shape of a human. Adlet, Rolonia, and I have kept it a secret, but there’s no point in doing so now. According to him, the Black Barren Flower is a girl with a horn on her head, white hair, and terribly cold eyes.”

“Wha…” Mora and Chamo were both shocked, but Fremy’s calm expression didn’t waver, despite the fact that a truth of the utmost importance had just been revealed about her.

“Why did you hide that?” Fremy asked.

“We were giving you some rope to hang yourself with, meow. We were wondering if you were hiding from us the fact that you the Black Barren Flower. So we pretended not to know and have been watching your actions.”

“…So that’s why.” Fremy replied.

“Well it’s no longer necessary to leave you be and watch you from afar. You yourself revealed the information about the Black Barren Flower to the group. If you had known that you were the Black Barren Flower and you planned to use that power to kill us then there is no way you would have told us, meow.”

“In a way,” Hans continued. “It seems to be okay to trust you, meow.”

“I understand why you did that,” Fremy said with a slight nod. She seemed convinced by his explanation.

Adlet felt a bit relieved. He’d been a little suspicious of Fremy, but Fremy had told them about her memories and restored his confidence.

Fremy hadn’t planned on killing the Heroes of the Six Flowers. She didn’t know that she was the Black Barren Flower.

Good, I don't have to doubt someone who means so much to me.

So Adlet decided what his next course of action would be: he would search for a way to stop the Black Barren Flower without Fremy having to die.

"I've had doubts all this time," Fremy said.

"What about, meow?"

"Why am I alive? If Tgurneu had really intended on killing me then he would never have left me slip away in the first place. It would have been best for him to crush my core while I was sleeping, or slip poison into my meals, or he could have just stabbed me in the back without saying a word."

"Yet Tgurneu specifically decided to explain why he was throwing me away and tell me how all the love everyone had felt for me had been a lie. Then he tried to kill me but none of that was necessary if he had just wanted me dead."

Fremy's voice was quiet, but Adlet could pick up the sadness in her tone. The despair she felt was deep, so deep that she couldn't even cry.

"This was all Tgurneu's plan. As he had anticipated, I hate the Kyoma and the Majin. As he had anticipated, I met up with the Six Flowers. And as he had anticipated, with the power of the Black Barren Flower I was about to kill the Six Flowers."

"I'm disgusted with how stupid I was."

For a long time the group was silent. Rolonia, Mora, and Goldof all seemed to be sympathizing with Fremy, and Dozzu and Nashetania looked to be feeling the same way. However, Chamo had eyes of suspicion trained right onto Fremy.

Then Adlet saw Hans quietly reach his hand down towards his sword.

"Everyone, listen up," Adlet yelled to the group in order to keep Hans from attacking.

"I don't think there is any more room for suspicion about the true identity of the Black Barren Flower. The problem now is, what should we do after this?" Adlet began.

"I think we should take out Tgurneu as soon as possible. If the person who activated the Saint Instrument is killed then the Black Barren Flower would lose its power. Perhaps Tgurneu is headed towards this temple. There's no way we can let this chance slip by," Adlet said.

"That's no good," Chamo replied instantly.

"Chamo and everyone else don't know when the crests will disappear. Chamo and everyone else can't be so carefree about this."

"…But," Goldof started. "Even if we fight now, Tgurneu would without a doubt run away immediately. The Black Barren Flower would remain and as long it survives then victory will be assured for Tgurneu. So even if we fight now it would be useless. As long as we don't kill Fremy we have no chance of defeating Tgurneu."

Hans flashed a thin smile. It was as if to say to Adlet that what he was doing was a waste of effort.

"It's sad, but we need to kill Fremy right here. There aren't any other options."

Adlet breathed a slight sigh. On the surface he was desperately trying to appear calm, but he had anticipated this. He had thought about what he should do in a situation like this, but Adlet had been worried about whether it would be forgiven by the others.

Then he quietly found his resolve. He decided early that he would absolutely protect Fremy. He would not change his mind now.

“I understand all of your excuses. But, there’s no way that’s going to happen. And seeing as the information about Fremy was revealed there is now no longer any need to keep this hidden.”

“….What do you mean?”

“A lot of people had been locked up and forced to work in this temple, and it seems that one of them had left behind information for us like Raina had. I found the information they left behind when Mora and the others were deciphering the Sacred Writing.”

Chamo and Goldof’s eyes opened wide.

“It was a strange room with a number of Kyoma corpses, and the instant I entered that room the floor at my feet began to glow.”

“”It’s a trap. Don’t kill the girl.” The light formed those words on the floor and then quickly disappeared. I looked for where it came from, but I couldn’t find anything.”

“Is that true?” Dozzu asked.

“Do you think I would lie?” Adlet shot back before continuing his story.

“I have no clue who left that message, how they transmitted it, or how that message got past Tgurneu and the other Kyoma. But, I did see that message and that’s a fact. Don’t kill the girl… I’m wondering if that was referring to Fremy,” Adlet said.

Everything he’d said had been a blatant lie. Adlet hadn’t found anything in the room with all the Kyoma corpses and there hadn’t been any words of light.

Adlet felt a strong sense of guilt in his chest. Not only was he deceiving his companions but also the one he loved.

Will they accept such a story? Adlet wasn’t sure; however, he knew that he wouldn’t be able to persuade them with just the few words he’d said.

“It doesn’t seem like so straightforward a problem to me. What will happen after the Black Barren Flower dies? To me it seems like Chamo and Goldof are taking that unknown far too lightly,” Adlet said.

“As long as the Black Barren Flower… Fremy lives we are definitely in danger, but I’m wondering if killing her would also lead to danger. Whoever was in this temple and left that information for us wanted to warn us of that.”

Adlet looked at the faces of his companions. They were trying to see through his expression and determine whether or not they were being tricked. Rolonia didn’t seem to have any suspicions towards Adlet. Goldof, Mora, and Chamo seemed to be confused, but they weren’t looking at Adlet with suspicion. And Hans was pacing about scratching his head.

As for Fremy, she stared at him with her usual cold stare. However, he couldn’t figure out what emotion was hiding behind that gaze.

“The reason I hid this is because if I had talked about it earlier we would have had to address the message and the

truth about Fremy's identity at the same time. I called to Mora and asked her to analyze the room, but she couldn't so I kept it to myself."

"Wait a second," Mora said as she closed her eyes and began to use her second sight. "The room that you spoke about where you found the Kyoma corpses is about fifteen meters above us and fifty meters to the east."

"I don't know where it is exactly, but I think that's about right."

"Based on what you've told us, those words were probably cast by the light of the light gems. There aren't any other Saint Instruments and I can't sense the power of any Kyoma. What kind of jewel was it that produced that message?"

"I said I have no idea."

For a while Mora continued to use her second sight.

"I'm looking for traces of Saint Instruments and the light from the gems, but I can't find anything out of the ordinary….Where did you see the writing come from?"

Mora craned her neck to the side in confusion. She seemed to be growing suspicious.

"If you don't know… then it's impossible for me to," Adlet said.

"I don't think it's strange that I can't find the origin of the words. The person who left behind the message must have done so in a way that the humans who weren't Flowers or one of the Kyoma couldn't find it, and the creator must have designed the message so it would disappear soon after revealing itself," said Mora before concluding, "I would think it was strange if I were able to find the origin of where such a message came from easily."

It's better if my secret is vague, Adlet thought. *It's better not to say exactly from where I got the information.* If he poorly confined himself within a lie then there would be a high chance of the truth being found out.

It wasn't necessary to completely deceive them; as long as they didn't figure out that he was lying then it was alright. The purpose of the lie was to induce them into thinking 'Killing Fremy might be dangerous'. If the lie could just make them think that then it had done its job.

"Even if we kill Fremy the danger would just be worse than ever," Goldof said with sweat dripping down his forehead.

Chamo also seemed shaken by the news. "Did you really see that, Adlet?"

"Of course. What the hell are you saying?"

Chamo didn't believe him completely. It seemed he needed one more push to convince her.

Nevertheless, little by little things seem to be going well, Adlet thought. Everyone was just starting to feel that killing Fremy would be dangerous.

If he could make all of his companions decide that they should kill Tgurneu then his lie would achieve its objective.

Adlet knew how difficult it would be to defeat Tgurneu based on their current situation. But, this was the only way he could think of to protect Fremy from the others.

"In any case, we have to take out Tgurneu eventually. If you are scared then we won't win. But relax; the Strongest Man in the World is here. I will definitely find a way to defeat him."

After that he would use his words to try and make everyone think that there was no other choice besides defeating

Tgurneu.

From now on it'll just be a battle of persuasion , Adlet thought.

But almost immediately after he thought that, Hans said, "Umeow. The Strongest Man in the World is reliable."

He was standing directly behind Adlet and he could feel something cold press the back of his neck.

Hans had touched his sword to the back of Adlet's neck.

"…Hans?" Since everyone was focused on Adlet, for a short moment none of them had realized what was happening.

"I admire your willingness to risk your life to protect the woman you love. That is why you are the Strongest Man in the World. However, meow, it isn't good to lie."

"…What kind of joke is this, Hans?" Adlet said.

Although he didn't sense any murderous intent, he understood that Hans was threatening him. And he had a hunch that if he were to make a wrong move then Hans would not hesitate to chop off at least one of his arms.

"If you say you're sorry I won't kill you. So apologize. Say you're sorry for lying."

"What are you doing? Stop it, Hans."

"I'll kill the brat right here if he doesn't apologize."

Adlet couldn't see Hans, but he had the feeling that Hans was smiling.

"What the hell are you talking about? I'm not lying."

"You are, though. I know because during the investigation I was tailing you, meow."

"…What did you say?"

That was impossible. He hadn't sensed anyone following him at all. Why is he lying all of a sudden? Adlet wondered and then looked to Mora.

Having used here second sight to look over the entire temple, she should have understood that Hans was lying.

However, unexpectedly she said, "Hans. I had thought what you were doing was strange… I didn't know why you followed Adlet."

Had he really followed me? It seems suspicious that he could do so without me even noticing him at all.

"I saw you enter the storeroom for the Kyoma corpses and at that time I couldn't see any kind of light or anything. And after you left the room I tried going in after you, but no writing in light appeared at my feet."

"Maybe you just weren't able to see it."

"Umeow. My eyes were wide open. Give up, Adlet. Your lie has already been exposed."

"Why were you following me?" Adlet asked.

Hans smiled. "I said to Mora, let's let Adlet go free. I want to see what the enemy does. There are signs that the enemy is going after Adlet, so I will follow after Adlet and see what happens."

“But my real intentions were different. I was really watching you.”

The others surrounding Adlet and Hans didn’t make a move. There was no opening to stop Hans and there was a real threat that he would not hesitate to kill Adlet.

“Do you want to know why? I have suspected you all along. I wondered if you would try to let Fremy run away either because you were swayed by emotion or some other reason. And to accomplish that I figured you were plotting some kind of monkey business.”

“…You…”

“There weren’t any signs that you had done anything, so I thought that I was off the mark. However, I didn’t think you would lie like this. It was a good thing I followed you.”

He hadn’t noticed. Fremy wasn’t the only person Hans was watching to see how they would act. When Adlet said that they would hide the information about Fremy Hans had agreed strangely quickly. That wasn’t because he had believed Adlet; it was because he was suspicious of him.

“Please calm down, Hans-san. For starters, please lower your sword,” Rolonia said as she gripped her whip.

“Why? I’m just scolding the brat a little bit for deceiving all of you.”

“He’s not necessarily lying. You simply might not have been able to see the light. So for the time being please step away from Ad-kun.”

“Do you think my eyes are that bad? Or could it be that you think I’m lying.”

This time even Rolonia’s rebuttal was in vain. Chamo, Goldof, Dozzu, and Nashetania were all looking at Adlet suspiciously. Deceiving them was becoming more and more hopeless by the second.

“Wait for a little while. Let me check the place Adlet talked about,” Mora said and turned to the side.

She then sprinted from the room as quickly as possible. And since the task was something Mora couldn’t do on her own, Chamo followed behind her.

“Umeow. Adlet. Give in already. That is your best option,” Hans said.

However there was no way Adlet was going to acquiesce. If they figured out he was lying then Fremy would be killed on the spot.

Would I be able to handle letting them kill Fremy here, despite the fact that she was one of their precious companions and the fact that there was a way to protect her? Can I deal with losing the only girl I’ve ever loved?

With Hans’ blade still on the back of his neck, Adlet waited. And after about fifteen minutes Mora and Chamo returned.

“Hans. Before anything else, lower your sword. We can’t talk if you don’t calm down.”

Hans shrugged and stepped away from Adlet.

“We picked up each of the gems in the room Adlet was talking about and checked each one.”

“Did you find it? The gem I was talking about that produced the words of light.”

“With just a look we couldn’t determine all of the power within the light gems.”

“So then…”

“However, Adlet we do understand that perhaps you are lying.”

Adlet gulped.

“Why do you think that?”

“All of the light gems in that room were created by a renowned Saint of Light over fifty years ago.”

“Which means?”

“That Saint created many light gems and made a lot of money selling them at a high price. Commerce isn’t prohibited since even at the temples money is important, so a large amount of gems she sold are circulating throughout the world.”

“And the gems that she made had a special characteristic. For starters, all of them are made of topaz. And on their surfaces are inscribed a single sacred word.”

“To-topaz? What’s that?”

“It’s a kind of jewel. The color is close to a pale yellow and it has a cylindrical shape.”

With a commoner’s education there was no way that Adlet would know the different types of gems, not to mention the fact that he was completely ignorant when it came to light gems.

Of course all of the gems that he’d found when he’d searched that room had been yellow. Even among the light gems that Mora had given the group earlier many of them had the same cylindrical shape she had just described. He had been under the impression that all light gems looked like that.

“Ah, you didn’t know that? About the light topazes Tohara made famous?” Nashetania said.

I don’t know anything about such high class products, Adlet thought.

“It’s not unthinkable that the light gems can project words of light in their current condition. However, when those gems were created Fremy hadn’t been born yet.”

“Of course that Saint of Light never went to the Wailing Demon Territory. And though it’s not impossible to add a new ability to an existing Saint Instrument, it is difficult. And we couldn’t find any traces of that either. It seems unlikely that the gems in that room projected any words of light.”

Adlet hadn’t anticipated his lie being exposed like this.

“Wait. There might have been something other than the light gems. After me or Hans left someone might have took it out of the room.”

“I’ll say it again. It doesn’t seem like there is anything in that room other than the light gems that can project words of light. It’s unthinkable that someone took it out of the room. There isn’t anyone in this temple other than us. All of the Kyoma have been eliminated and there aren’t any enemy intruders within the temple. It’s unlikely,” Mora said with a sigh. “Unfortunately Adlet, it doesn’t seem to me like you are telling the truth.”

Their inability to find any proof had been expected. In fact, Adlet had just talked about the words of light without giving it any serious thought. And now his companions were all looking at him suspiciously.

However the problem wasn’t that Adlet had deceived them. It was that the feelings of his companions, who had once

hesitated about killing Fremy, seemed to be changing.

Adlet looked over to her. And though she still had her same cold gaze, within that eye he could see disappointment.

“I… I definitely saw the words of light. Even if you weren’t able to find any proof, that’s the truth.”

But at that moment he realized that he’d been mistaken about what he saw in Fremy’s gaze.

It wasn’t disappointment. It was clear hostility and it was aimed right at Adlet.

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Chapter Two: Part Three

Honestly, he's such an idiot.

Fremy wondered how many times she'd thought that about Adlet. If she counted it out on her fingers she would definitely run out of fingers.

She didn't even need to listen to Mora's explanation of the light gems, Fremy already knew that Adlet was probably lying. She could tell just by looking at his face. To Fremy, his discomposure came across as pathetic.

When she sometimes thought he seemed clever, he would do something strange and seem like an immature fool.

"…A complete idiot," Fremy muttered.

But Adlet wasn't the only fool she was condemning. She had been just as much a fool as he was.

Right, an idiot. Surely there isn't a fool as big as me anywhere else in the world.

For all eighteen years of her life she hadn't done a single thing that hadn't been foolish.

Fremy thought back to her past and tried to digest just how much of a fool she'd been.

The first thing that came to mind was the night that Fremy had lost everything. It was the time she had been betrayed by the family she believed had loved her.

#

Beaten by Chamo, Fremy crawled across the grasslands, dragging her leg that had been torn to shreds. So that she wouldn't be followed by the trail of bloodstains she forcibly stopped the bleeding by using gunpowder to cauterize her wounds. It hurt so badly that it felt like she would pass out from the pain.

All of the companions that had traveled with her had been wiped out. The metamorphosis Kyoma bearing the responsibility of transforming Fremy into a human. The Kyoma who was tasked with providing cover with the smokescreens it produced. The Kyoma that could manipulate humans who gathered information for the group. Chamo killed them all.

It was mortifying.

Fremy had worked and trained extremely hard for Tgurneu and her family. She had learned how to handle a gun, done countless combat drills, and polished her abilities as a Saint. But all of her work had proven futile in front of a true prodigy.

Chamo Rosso. The Saint of Swamps. A monster by nature. A girl who possessed the greatest power without having to put in any kind of hard work to attain it. Fremy couldn't tolerate losing to an opponent like that.

"…Guu."

Fremy's body twisted in pain. Nevertheless, she kept walking.

This isn't over yet, Fremy thought. *I still have my rifle. And I still have the charms my family gave me.*

Fremy had placed a small bag in her pocket. Within that were objects that would seem like nothing but junk to the other Kyoma, but Fremy had carefully carried them with her for ages.

The objects were: a tooth that the white lizard had given her, a piece of the red ant's husk with the word loyalty carved into it, one of the Piercing Bird's feathers, a section of her mother's antennae, and a dog whistle.

Though she had lost to Chamo and was injured, she had escaped without letting go of those charms. She had a feeling that her family bonds would lead to her victory.

As long as those charms remain and as long as I'm sure of the bond I share with my family I can fight again. And next time I'll definitely win. With those thoughts in her mind, Fremy was able to keep moving.

However, despite those charms she wasn't able to erase her mortification. She couldn't help but apologize to everyone.

She would step out in front of her family and the other Kyoma and declare that next time she would absolutely be victorious.

She would make them promise not to call her a halfbreed again if she defeated Chamo. She would make them vow that her family would never be tormented again. She would come out and say that she wanted everyone to be at peace and that she didn't want her family to be hurt any further.

My family will probably be disappointed and it's likely that I'll be subjected to the scorn of Tgurneu and the others. That would be more painful than anything else.

Still unable to think of the right words for an apology, Fremy managed to reach her nesting place in a corner of the grasslands.

However, inside the cave Fremy saw something she hadn't expected: Tgurneu.

I wonder how many years it's been since we last saw one another.

"I apologize. I betrayed your expectations and Chamo Rosso…"

"You're forgetting your greetings," Tgurneu scolded, cutting her off mid-sentence.

"Good evening master Tgurneu. The moon is nice tonight."

Tgurneu sighed and at that moment Fremy noticed her family behind Tgurneu. The white lizard and the Piercing Bird had on multiple occasions supported Fremy in her battles. But it was unusual to see her mother and the red ant. In fact, it was perhaps the first time they had ever left the Wailing Demon Territory.

"Mother, Red ant, you came for me. I'm happy, but… sorry. Chamo…"

They probably came to hear good news, Fremy thought. It hurt that she couldn't let them hear that.

"Is this the result of all the effort we took personally raising you under our care? Not only did you come crawling back here after you lost, but you forgot your greetings? That's unfortunate, Fremy."

It seemed like Tgurneu already knew that she had been defeated. Fremy shrank a bit and listened to his scolding. It was the law of the Kyoma that any who were not useful would be killed. The fear of dying made Fremy's body tremble.

"We apologize, Master Tgurneu," said the red ant.

“We’re sad to say… it was beyond our power,” continued the Piercing Bird.

It’s not your fault, Fremy thought.

The red ant had helped Fremy with her battle training non-stop. And the Piercing Bird had worked hard to collect information from the human world. It was Fremy’s fault she lost.

“Ah, Fremy. Why did your useless self come back alive? Did you think that we were hoping to see a loser survivor?” Fremy’s mother asked.

Fremy bit her lip. Her mother had been strict but this was the first time that she had ever used such harsh words with her.

“Is this how weak of a Half-breed you are? I’m quite disappointed,” said the white lizard.

Halfbreed was the word the other Kyoma called Fremy. It was a word that had never come from the mouths of her family. For the white lizard to spit such a word at her must have meant that Fremy had committed a terrible failure.

“It is not any of your faults. No, you all did well. You gave me this love and at the very least succeeded in turning a defective person like me into a functional Kyoma.”

“I appreciate your praise. But, the fact is you weren’t able to leave behind any results…”

“That’s right. And now you’ll all be punished,” Fremy replied automatically. “Master Tgurneu, please, just punish me… my family did everything right.”

But the next instant a scathing rebuke flew at her from behind.

“Quiet halfbreed! Don’t open your filthy mouth!” the white lizard shouted.

Did I make my family that angry? Fremy wondered. Halfbreed was a word she never wanted to hear, and yet it had just been hurled at her twice.

“She’s disgusting. She says ‘just punish me.’ The words of a halfbreed are filthy.”

This time it was the Piercing Bird who had spoken. He had been the kindest member of her family, but even he was calling her a halfbreed.

“Piercing Bird, you should know that the halfbreed is a low-life, as is befitting of a halfbreed.”

This is weird, Fremy started to think. *Is this really my family? They completely detest me. Isn’t that just like the other Kyoma? This must be a dream or something. Or have Cargikk’s followers disguised themselves as her family?*

But Fremy couldn’t believe the next words that came from Tgurneu.

“You and your followers are freed of your responsibilities. You don’t need to raise Fremy anymore. You also don’t have to pretend to shower her with love.”

What did he mean by pretend? My family have protected me my entire life. What about their behavior had just been for pretend?

“Ah, what a relief. We don’t need to be associated with this filthy halfbreed any more.”

Fremy noticed that her feet were shaking. She couldn’t accept what was happening in front of her was real.

“It has been a tough responsibility being beside this halfbreed for eighteen years.”

“Is that so? You have my praise for all your hard work,” Tgurneu replied.

“Yes. What was repulsive about this half-breed was that she had showed us affection. And don’t let me get started on how bad that felt…”

“That was probably difficult. But, it’s all over now.”

This can’t be true, Fremy thought. *My family definitely loves me. That’s the only reason I was able to survive. It’s impossible for that love to be a lie.*

“It’s okay to kill her. Let out all the pent-up rage you’ve been holding back,” Tgurneu said and all at once Fremy’s family rushed towards her and attacked.

“It’s not true.”

Fremy didn’t dodge or try to block their attacks, and The Piercing Bird stabbed Fremy with his beak while the red ant bit into Fremy’s injured leg.

“It’s a lie, it’s a lie, it’s obviously a lie,” Fremy screamed as she shook the two Kyoma off of her. Then she ran out from the nest.

She didn’t remember just how she ran away. All Fremy remembered were the words the family she had once trusted had said and the despair that completely engulfed her heart.

“Are you running away halfbreed?”

“You’re not even going to obey Master Tgurneu’s commands?”

Fremy had been able to get stronger thanks to her family, and she had wanted to get stronger so that she could protect her family. Her family helped her and that was how she was able to tolerate the hell she went through every day. Everything she’d experienced and done was because she had loved her family.

“Did you really think that we loved you?”

“You thought we could love something like you.”

Fremy had wanted to protect everyone. She had believed that if she got stronger that she would be able to do so. But every member of her family thought even her feelings of love had been disgusting.

“Monster!”

“No. More than a monster, you’re a worthless piece of trash. Hurry and die!”

What have I even been fighting for? Why did I even become strong? What should I do now?

Unable to understand, Fremy ran into a thicket. And as she staggered through the thicket, holding her hands to her wounds, the red ant and the piercing bird appeared in front of her.

“Hey, red ant, Piercing bird. Tell me one thing.”

As the two Kyoma slowly edged their way closer to her it seemed like they already thought even answering would be repulsive.

“Was this all Master Tgurneu’s plan? Was making me suffer just an order you received?”

That was Fremy’s final hope. She had absolutely no idea why, but she hoped that all of this was because Tgurneu

had thought it was necessary to treat her like this, and so her family would have no choice but to obey.

Suddenly she looked to the distance. Tgurneu was looking down at Fremy and her family. And he was smiling.

“Was that it?” Fremy pressed.

“She’s strange, don’t you two agree?” Tgurneu asked to the red ant and the piercing bird before turning to address Fremy.

“You still think that they love you? Half-breeds are curious creatures, huh?”

Fremy then heard the red ant and the Piercing Bird laugh. They were mocking her.

And that was when Fremy was sure. *It was true. They had just pretended to love me.*

“….You laughed.”

The red ant and the Piercing Bird charged at Fremy, and right behind them Tgurneu followed in attack.

“You laughed. You laughed at me.”

Fremy produced a bomb in her hand and stuck it in the Piercing Bird’s face, then she dodged the red ant’s attack and wrapped her hands around her rifle grip.

The sound of the family she loved mocking her and the sound of that family’s death were seared into her eardrums.

And even now she could still hear them.

Then with a scream of rage Fremy charged at Tgurneu. But what happened next had completely disappeared from her memory.

#

No matter where I look there’s probably no one as foolish as me , Fremy thought.

Without even noticing that her family had really not loved her she had struggled for dear life in her devotion to them, and all of that worthless effort just piled up over the years. Without having any reason to hate humans she hated them. And though it wasn’t necessary to kill them, she had killed potential Flowers.

Even if it was just that she would probably still be a hopeless fool. However, what was truly her most foolish act was what came after: Fremy vowed to get revenge against Tgurneu and came to the Wailing Demon Territory. She had met up with the Six Flowers and she had fought by their side. And all the while she hadn’t had the faintest idea that it was all a part of Tgurneu’s plan.

Everything had gone as Tgurneu had anticipated. In fact, Fremy’s entire existence was due to Tgurneu. Even if she looked, there was no fool in the whole world who would live to benefit the one they vowed revenge against.

“Mora, just because you say that there aren’t any light gems capable of making that message that doesn’t mean there is any proof that I’m lying,” Adlet said.

Mora countered, “I searched for if there was another Saint Instrument, but I didn’t find anything. And it doesn’t seem like the powers of a Saint or a Kyoma either.”

“But!”

Adlet was still insisting that the words of light were real. However, Fremy wasn’t even listening any more.

There's probably no point in listening, she thought.

"Enough. I'm fed up with this," Fremy said coldly.

"Hey, you're not thinking by any chance that it's alright for you to die here or something stupid like that, right?" Adlet asked.

"Even if I thought that, it doesn't matter."

"Stop screwing around. I will never let something like that happen. You understand that letting you die is dangerous…. Or do you intend on saying you don't trust me anymore?"

"…I'm not saying that. Relax."

As Fremy replied she put her hand into her clothes. She then took out a small block of wood and gently gripped it.

It was the dog whistle, one of the good luck charms that had been given to her by her family. Every day when it became time to feed her dog, she would blow that whistle. Her dog would be wandering around the home but upon hearing the whistle would always come flying and wagging its tail. And in that instant, Fremy felt more at peace than at any other time in her life.

She had thrown away all of the other charms that her family had given her. She broke them, burned them with gunpowder, and kicked away the ashes. The dog whistle was the only one that she held onto for all this time.

She knew that she would definitely never be able to see him again. Nevertheless, she continued to hold on to the whistle. When she defeated the Majin and succeeded in her revenge, she planned on calling her dog with the whistle.

First she would confirm that he was alive and well and then she wanted to die. But she knew that was a wish that would never be granted.

Fremy dropped it on the ground and stepped on it. The wooden dog whistle let out a small cry as it broke.

Her companions just leaned their heads to the side, unable to understand what she was doing.

"I won't say that it's okay, but I decided that I will die now. No matter what you plan on saying I will kill myself right here."

Adlet's face filled with despair and Rolonia shook her head in disagreement, but Fremy had already made up her mind.

It would certainly make Tgurneu happy if Fremy were to keep on living. As long as she was alive he'd probably be chuckling about how his defeat was impossible.

And Fremy couldn't tolerate that. Not even for a minute. Not even for a second.

All of Tgurneu's plan hadn't been made clear to her. However, it was likely that Fremy's death would ruin a large part of it.

She would crush the plan that he had plotted for many years. That would be enough to satisfy her revenge. It wasn't the complete revenge that she'd wanted, but at the very least she was satisfied with the fact that she could die.

"Right. You'll die… So… leave the rest to Chamo," Chamo said in a slightly pained voice.

Mora and Goldof both looked to the floor as if they regretted that Fremy would die. Nashetania and Dozzu also

gazed at Fremy with sad looks in their eyes.

That's unexpected, Fremy thought. She had thought that they'd be a little happier.

"No," Adlet said and walked closer to Fremy. "Why are you saying that? You don't want to die, right? So why aren't you saying that you want to live?"

Adlet extended his hand to Fremy, but the next instant a gunshot rang through the narrow corridor.

If Adlet didn't twist and dodge then the bullet probably would have gone right through his shoulder.

"I'll shoot if you get any closer."

In an instant Fremy reloaded her rifle and firmly aimed the barrel at Adlet's stomach.

"I won't let you protect me."

Fremy's rifle remained trained on Adlet's body as he stared at her in utter disbelief.

#

At the same time Tgurneu's main force was heading towards the Temple of Fate. They had already passed the plains and the Fainting Mountains were right around the corner. Tgurneu, now having taken the form of a giant wolf Kyoma, wasn't walking there on his own, but relaxing atop the back of a turtle Kyoma.

"The stars are beautiful today," Tgurneu said.

Dark Specialist Number 2, someone who could be called Tgurneu's close aide, was quiet by his side.

"What's the matter?"

"….The Black Barren Flower… essentially."

Number 2 spoke to Tgurneu in a code that only the two of them could understand. The existence of the Black Barren Flower was kept a secret from most of the Kyoma.

"I understand that everything is proceeding without any problems. However, I'm wondering if something is happening that we hadn't anticipated…"

"You don't understand," Tgurneu replied in the same code, as if to say that Number 2 was being a kill-joy.

"No one can defend against every kind of unexpected occurrence. Rather we should be prepared for what will definitely happen."

"But…"

Number 2 kept challenging Tgurneu. He was the only Kyoma that could voice his opinion to Tgurneu freely.

"If it happens then it happens. There's nothing we can do about that. Wouldn't times like that be when the seventh steps in? Until now they have been leisurely staying with the Flowers, but soon they will have to work for us, so it's meaningless for them to come here," Tgurneu said and then smiled.

"No matter what happens, it won't be a problem. The seventh will deal with everything. And I can say that because that's how much I believe in the Seventh."

#

Meanwhile, Dark Specialist Number 30 had been using his whole-body listening apparatus to eavesdrop on the Six Flowers' conversation."

"…What should we do, Number 30?"

"I still haven't decided."

The two of them spoke to each other quietly enough that Mora couldn't hear.

They hadn't even been aware of a fragment of Tgurneu's plan. If Fremy was the Black Barren Flower and her death meant the defeat of Tgurneu's forces then they needed to act now.

But, if letting Fremy get killed was a trap or if there was some other objective then there was a chance that the two Kyoma's actions would ruin everything.

The main force of Kyoma that Tgurneu commanded was still far away and there were no signs that Number 2, who was tasked with the role of giving missions of the utmost importance, was coming. Unable to come to a decision the two Kyoma just continued to wait within the temple labyrinth.

A little later the two of them did receive an order. The seventh: the one who had been given a fake crest and had infiltrated among the Six Flowers told them their mission.

The seventh ordered the two Kyoma to kill Fremy Speeddraw.

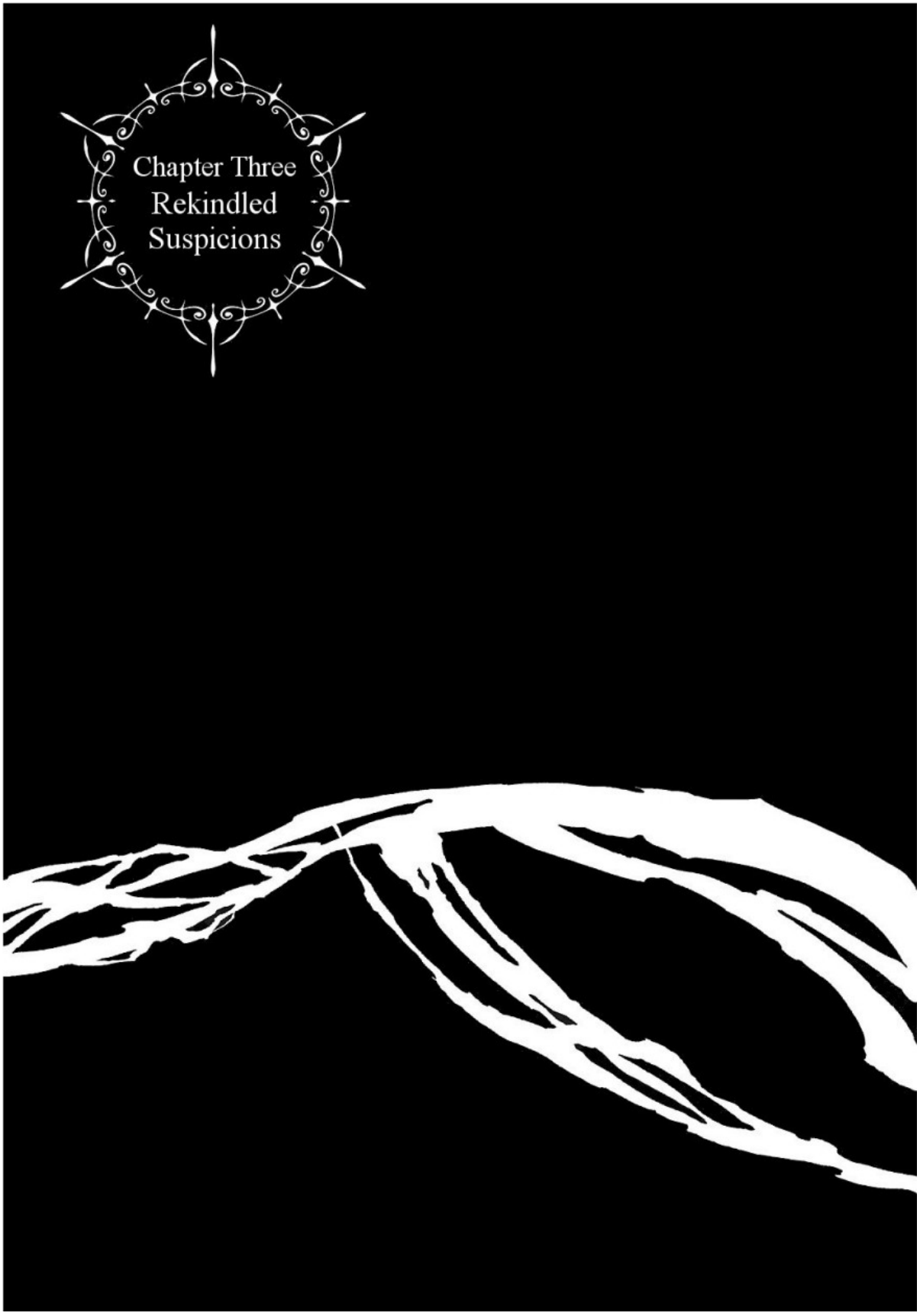
And to get rid of Adlet Maia if he tried to stop them.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page

Next Page



Chapter Three: Part One

Fremy didn’t feel any kind of hesitation about dying. In fact, she’d actually felt relief when she decided to die.

It’s okay not to live anymore.

The moment she thought that it felt like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders. Since half a year ago, the day that she had lost everything, her life had been nothing more than a heavy burden.

Fremy once again thought back to the past.

She didn't remember how she had fought with Tgurneu. When she finally became aware of her surroundings again, she was walking through the wilderness with her body and clothes in shreds. All she had on her were her empty rifle and the charms in her clothes.

She remembered unconsciously muttering as she walked, "I won't forgive them. I'll kill them."

Until then she had traveled alongside a Metamorphosis Kyoma who had the power to change Fremy's appearance to appear like a human, and she had also received support from the Kyoma that had been lurking in secret within the human world. But now they were all gone.

If the humans saw Fremy with her horn they would call her a monster and attack her, so now after running from Kyoma it was time for her to run from humans.

I should die, Fremy thought again and again. There was no longer anywhere she could return home to, and no longer any reason for her to live. The thought of dying was the only thing that brought her peace of mind.

At times she was close to letting the swords of the humans impale her, and there was even a time when she placed a bomb to the core in her head and was about to blow her head off. But right before either of those happened Fremy reconsidered and chose to continue living.

Each time she tried to throw away her life Tgurneu's face appeared in her mind. She felt like he was laughing scornfully at her.

"Letting Fremy get away was a nuisance, but thankfully she selfishly committed suicide." She got the feeling that Tgurneu was saying something to that effect.

Fremy thought about Tgurneu as she wandered the human world. *Why had my family pretended to love me?*

If her family hadn't pretended to love her then she wouldn't have suffered. If she had lived without ever knowing love then she certainly wouldn't have any hesitation about dying. Nevertheless, Tgurneu had taught her love and then betrayed it.

And then Fremy finally realized the truth.

Tgurneu had clearly been enjoying seeing Fremy suffer as she lost the love she'd known. He had made her family pretend to love her for his amusement.

I can't forgive him.

She had to kill Tgurneu and pay him back for everything he had a hand in causing, and she had to make him experience the defeat of the Majin, which for a Kyoma was the greatest form of suffering imaginable. If she didn't then she couldn't die peacefully.

She broke off her own horn in order to hide within the human world. Then in the middle of the night she snuck into a blacksmith's workshop, stole some lead and fashioned bullets for her rifle. She also readied her other equipment and waited for the time of her revenge. And that was when she decided that she would use the Six Flowers' fight as an opportunity to shoot Tgurneu dead.

#

Though imperfectly, Fremy was able to take on the appearance of a human girl. In the human world it was relatively easy to receive kindness and buy sympathy. Sometimes people seeking money or her body would appear, but those kinds of people she could deal with just her bare hands.

She'd been worried that maybe the entire world would pursue her if it were revealed that she was the Six Flower Killer, however for some reason a description of her appearance hadn't been distributed to the public and so the number of people looking for her had been limited.

Hiding among the humans in their world wasn't that difficult. However, that was only if they didn't know she was a Kyoma.

She wrapped a cloth around her head to hide the scar where she had broken off her horn – proof of her Kyoma lineage, and she wore an eye patch to conceal her different colored eye which would definitely stand out otherwise. Nevertheless, there were instances when the cloths would come off and her true identity would be exposed.

Each time that happened the people around her ran away in fear. And then later they would form an armed mob and come back to attack her.

If she fought them they would die. Even if she took it easy on them they might suffer injuries that they would never be able to recover from, so each time she was attacked she had no choice but to run.

Fremy, the one who had trained for so long, been bestowed with power from a god, and had confronted Six Flower candidates: the average human simply couldn't harm her. The only thing that hurt was her heart.

After being thrown away by Tgurneu she didn't intend to kill anyone else. Unlike the other Kyoma she didn't instinctively hate humans, and she didn't hunger for human flesh. She simply had no reason to fight them.

I'd like to be left alone, she said time and time again. Sometime she tried to convince them that she didn't intend to fight. There were even times when she placed down her weapon as a sign of surrender. However, no one believed her and the attacks never stopped.

They attacked her for only one reason: she was a Kyoma.

Fremy understood that someone who was born from a human and a Kyoma had no place to return home.

If she thought back to that time, she wished she'd killed herself then. If she had died at that time then she would have gotten her revenge on Tgurneu.

About ten days before the Majin awoke Fremy was hiding in a desolate forest a good distance away from any towns. She was on the brink of exhaustion after running from humans again and again non-stop. Then one day a man and a woman with gentle voices found her and called to her; it was an old married pair of hunters who lived on a mountain nearby.

They ushered her over to a safe place and soft bed, things that Fremy had been seeking for what seemed like ages.

I can trust people like these, Fremy thought. *Until the Majin reawakens and the Heroes of the Six Flowers appear they will let me rest here*, she thought. Because of their warm hospitality, Fremy was even able to think about fighting the Majin.

Then one night Fremy revealed her true identity. She removed her eyepatch and showed them the scar where her horn used to be. She talked about all the things that had happened to her without holding anything back. Over and over Fremy insisted that everything she was saying was the truth and felt like the old couple believed her.

However, Fremy noticed that the breakfast that they prepared for her the next morning tasted slightly strange. It had

been poisoned – a trap they used to exterminate beasts.

Without saying a word Fremy stood up from her seat, gathered her things, and left the small hut. She didn't feel anger or sadness. She was just dumbfounded by her stupidity.

At that time the last conversation she had with her family echoed in her mind. It was the curses of the family she had loved, the words that revealed how they had pretended to love her and how painful it had been to be with her all those years.

But Fremy didn't harbor any animosity towards her family or even the old married hunters. She had always tried to protect her family, and she had wished to devote herself to their well-being because of everything they had done for her.

Yet that didn't matter. Fremy was where she was was because the humans and the Kyoma hated her.

I am a monster who isn't loved by anyone. I'm a monster who'll never be accepted by anyone for eternity. Even though people had pretended to love her, she would never truly be loved, and even if she loved someone they would never accept it. She was so sure of that that she could feel it deep within her bones.

As a child born of a human and a Kyoma, Fremy cursed her fate.

She wished she could die.

If I die I wonder how at peace I'll be.

But, each time she wanted to die memories of Tgurneu intruded into her mind.

As long as Tgurneu was in the world and as long as she didn't fulfill her revenge, Fremy couldn't even die.

Fremy couldn't believe her own eyes when the crest of the Six Flowers appeared on her body, nor did she understand why she had been chosen.

After a while, Fremy recalled the fight she'd had with her pursuers after she'd killed Asley, the Saint of Ice. As she fled she'd run on to a tournament grounds where people went to show their power to the Goddess of Fate, and there she killed her enemies.

Thinking back on it now, even that had probably been a part of Tgurneu's plan. It was all a ploy to lure Fremy to the Wailing Demon Territory and meet up with the Six Flowers.

However, at that time she hadn't realized Tgurneu's true intentions. She was bewildered by her unfortunate existence, but that didn't stop her from heading to the Wailing Demon Territory.

#

And now Fremy had her rifle thrust right into Adlet's gut. Finally she could relax and receive death. Even if that meant she had to eliminate Adlet – the last obstacle in her way.

#

The muzzle was jammed right into the center of his stomach. A bullet fired there would be extremely difficult to evade. There was even a risk that he'd die.

Adlet sensed that if he tried to stop her that she would seriously not hesitate to shoot him.

Why is she trying to die this much? He couldn't figure it out.

“If you’re going to shoot, then shoot. No matter what you do to me I will not allow you to kill yourself.”

“…Is that so?”

The instant Adlet was about to leap towards Fremy, Hans grabbed his shoulder from the side. Though one couldn’t imagine it from his wiry appearance, Hans’ grip was strong enough to make the bones in his shoulder creak.

“I’ll hold this guy. You relax and die.”

“Thanks for the help.”

Fremy raised her rifle away from Adlet and started to point it towards her head, but instead of Adlet, it was Rolonia who ran in front of Fremy and grabbed her hands.

“Please wait a second. You can’t die.”

Rolonia’s hands were shaking. She was using all of her strength to restrain Fremy.

“Rolonia, calmly think about this. As long as I’m alive the Six Flowers can’t win,” Fremy said with a voice tinged by a hint of anger.

“Didn’t Ad-kun say not to kill the girl? That it would be a trap?”

“He was lying.”

“Ad-kun isn’t a liar! …No, sometimes he lies, but he isn’t the type of person who would lie and expose us all to danger. Hans-san just didn’t see the words and Mora-san just couldn’t find the place where the words of light came from.”

Adlet felt a slight pain in his chest. However, there was no way he was going to breathe a word of the truth.

“Adlet is a liar.” Chamo spat coldly while holding her foxtail grass to her lips.

“Step aside, stupid cow. Fremy is going to die here for Chamo and the others. It’s sad, but it can’t be helped.”

“No. I will not step aside,” Rolonia said, not budging an inch.

“Even if it is true that Adlet saw the words of light we cannot wait to confirm if it will be dangerous to let Fremy die,” Nashetania said.

Then Dozzu continued, “Those words might have been false information left behind by Tgurneu so that Fremy-san would not die. No, not ‘maybe,’ the possibility of that being true seems high. It does not seem like a person like Tgurneu would overlook a clue left behind of that importance.”

“Bu…but.”

Despite what everyone was saying, Rolonia didn’t let go of Fremy. As for Adlet, he tried to shake out of Hans’ grip, but with just one hand Hans was able to restrain him to the point that he couldn’t move at all.

“Wait, I’m sure you said this earlier,” Goldof said, entering the conversation. “The crest of the seventh was created by the Saint of a Flower. There’s a chance that killing the bearer of that crest would work against us.”

Still holding onto Adlet’s shoulder, Hans replied, “I don’t think that Fremy is the seventh. If Fremy were the seventh and acting according to Tgurneu’s orders then there’s no way that she would confess to being the Black Barren Flower. She would probably tell us about how she had been betrayed by her family and Tgurneu, but perhaps that would have been about it.”

“…That does make sense if that’s the case,” Goldof replied and stopped resisting. Even he approved of Fremy’s death.

“There’s something wrong with all of you! It’s dangerous to kill Fremy! Defeating Tgurneu is the only choice left!”

“Can you be quiet, liar?” Chamo asked.

Watching everyone, Dozzu sighed.

“This is dangerous. As your allies we would appreciate it if you would refrain from this infighting.”

“There’s no need to worry. Fremy will kill herself here and that will be the end of this,” Hans replied.

“No. I won’t let Fremy die. We should all kill Tgurneu,” Adlet replied.

“…Regardless, we will not take part in your decision. The Six Flowers should decide,” Dozzu replied, and he and Nashetania distanced themselves from the others. They clearly wanted no part of this debacle.

“Rolonia, take your hands off of Fremy,” Goldof said and started to approach Rolonia.

Then Adlet made up his mind. He was out of options.

He reached for a string stretching from his clothes and Hans immediately let go of Adlet. He was cautious of the tear gas sown into Adlet’s clothes.

However, Adlet had predicted how Hans would react. Instead of pulling the cord he wheeled around and drove his toes into Hans’ solar plexus.

“Guh…”

Adlet had kicked him with all of his strength. Even Hans shouldn’t be able to move for a while after that.

Adlet then stepped towards Fremy, and in an instant he took out a paralysis dart from one of the bags on his waist.

He would stop her from killing herself even if he had to use brute force. It was the only option left. First he would paralyze Fremy, and then he would subdue her. After that he would have to carry her over his shoulder and flee before Hans or Chamo killed her.

He hadn’t thought about what he would do after that. However, for now that was the only choice he had.

“Adlet!”

Goldof moved to try and stop Adlet and Chamo stuck the foxtail grass into her throat. However, the two of them were too slow to catch Adlet.

The first thing he had to do was to immobilize Fremy so Adlet started to throw a paralyzing dart at her, aiming for her exposed midriff. However, Adlet felt a shock rush down his back.

Adlet’s balance crumbled and he fell to the stone floor before finally realizing what had hit him. Hans had thrown his sword and the hilt had smashed into his back.

However even though Adlet was on the ground, he was still able to throw a paralysis dart and it struck Fremy square in the stomach.

The moment the dart punctured her skin she stopped moving and the energy left the hands that Rolonia was trying

to keep restrained.

“Stop it, Adlet!”

Goldof jumped towards the fallen Adlet.

Hans was also on his feet and had drawn his second sword. However, when it looked like he was going to head towards Fremy and kill her, Mora grappled him to a standstill.

“What are you doing, meow?”

“Calm down! Stop this infighting right now!”

Hit by the paralysis dart, Fremy’s body crumbled to the ground as if she were a puppet whose strings had just been cut.

Watching her hit the floor, Adlet shouted, “Rolonia! Grab Fremy and run!”

At exactly the same time, Hans also shouted, “Chamo! Kill Fremy!”

However, Chamo didn’t even need to wait to hear Hans’ order. She was already moving, and vomited out some Jyuma that headed over to eliminate Fremy.

In response to Adlet’s cry, Rolonia started to move. She swung her whip in a wide sweeping motion and all of Chamo’s Jyuma were scattered backwards.

“Run, Rolonia! Hurry!” Adlet shouted, but at the exact same time Goldof pinned him down to the ground.

Adlet desperately wiggled his left hand out of Goldof’s hold and threw a smoke bomb from one of the pouches on his waist. It exploded at the center of the Jyuma and the narrow corridor filled with smoke.

Within the smoke, Adlet could faintly see Rolonia pick up Fremy’s body and run down the labyrinth away from Saint of a Flower’s room. Then Chamo’s Jyuma followed her.

“Idiots! Everyone stop it! Stop this fighting at once!” Mora shouted, but there wasn’t anyone in the labyrinth who was listening to her.

Soon the smoke dissipated and Chamo, Rolonia, and Fremy were nowhere to be seen. Goldof was holding Adlet down and Mora was holding Hans still.

“…This is dangerous. We can’t leave Chamo-san and the others be,” Nashetania said as she wiped some dust off her clothing. Then she drew her rapier and ran down the labyrinth corridor after Chamo and Rolonia.

“Wait! Nashetania! Don’t act on your own!” Mora shouted, but without turning around, Nashetania rounded a corner and disappeared.

“Please calm down. She probably just headed to stop the fighting. I am sure they she does not intend to cause trouble for the Six Flowers,” Dozzu said.

“What the… Adlet, what stupidity have you done,” Mora said, looking at Adlet with resentment. Even Goldof was looking down at him with anger.

However, if Adlet hadn’t paralyzed Fremy she would have killed herself. If he hadn’t told Rolonia to run then Fremy would have been killed. So he didn’t have even a fraction of guilt.

The problem lay ahead: the effect of the dart wouldn’t last long and Adlet didn’t know how long Rolonia could keep

on running.

How am I supposed to protect Fremy after the paralysis wears off?

Adlet had no idea.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page
Next Page

Chapter Three: Part Two

“Heeee, heeee, heeee,” Rolonia wheezed, unable to catch her breath as she ran through the labyrinth.

On her shoulder, Fremy tried desperately to move, but she could not budge even a finger. It seemed like Adlet had used an extremely powerful paralysis dart.

Fremy then tried to produce gunpowder in her hand; she planned to produce a bomb strong enough to destroy herself without harming Rolonia. However, the paralysis didn’t just affect her body, it also extended to her mind. And without concentration the bomb wouldn’t take shape in her hand.

He tricked me, Fremy thought.

She had been so preoccupied with Rolonia that she had allowed her guard against Adlet to grow lax. She had taken his power far too lightly.

“Run, you have to run, but umm, which way…” Rolonia muttered.

It was probably very tough for her to run with Fremy on her back. And whether it was out of conscientiousness or just by coincidence, Rolonia was even carrying Fremy’s rifle.

Rolonia just turned corners and went up and down flights of stairs without any idea where she was headed. The fact that she didn’t hit a dead end yet was simply thanks to luck. Fremy could hear the screams of the Jyuma behind them, and mixed with them she could also faintly hear Chamo’s shouts of anger.

“Stupid cow! If you don’t stop Chamo will kill you!”

“Aaaahhh… wh… wh… what should I do?”

Fremy felt sorry for Rolonia. The cowardly girl couldn’t handle being pursued by Chamo. But she didn’t look down on Rolonia for being afraid. She knew firsthand just how terrifying it was to be chased by Chamo.

However, this was not the time to feel pity. She had to escape from Rolonia’s grasp, somehow. Yet, even though she knew what she needed to do, her body wouldn’t move at all.

“Mora-san, which way should I go? Mora-san, please answer me! Mora-san!” Rolonia shouted.

However, Mora’s mountain echoes never answered back.

Rolonia was approaching a three-forked road, but she could hear Jyuma approaching her from each path. It seemed like Chamo had ordered her Jyuma to split up and surround Rolonia.

“I’m… I’m sorry Jyuma-san!”

Rolonia swung her whip and struck the Jyuma down hard. In the narrow hallway they couldn’t come at her all at once, and with her ability to manipulate blood she was able to draw out their blood and cause the Jyuma to collapse to the ground. The remaining Jyuma screamed, relaying Rolonia’s position to Chamo.

“Fr, Fremy-san, please… relax… I won’t let you die,” Rolonia said as she ran.

Gradually both the roars of the Jyuma and Chamo grew faint. Maybe as they went up and down countless flights of stairs Chamo got lost.

What are all you doing? Fremy thought in irritation.

Hans and Goldof, are you still Heroes of the Six Flowers?

“Fremy-san,” Rolonia said. She had come to a stop and was trying to catch her breath.

“I understand that you think you have no choice but to die, both for everyone’s sake and for the world. However, I hate that. Ad-kun said it. We can’t abandon our companions and we have to protect one another until the very end. If we don’t feel like protecting one another then even the fights we can win will become hopeless. And…”

There seemed to be another Jyuma on the other side of a 4-way intersection. Rolonia stopped and hid in the shadow of a pillar. When she saw it had passed by and was heading in a different location, Rolonia ran down the path the Jyuma had come from.

“Fremy-san is important to Ad-kun. If you were to die then he wouldn’t be able to fight anymore. With his friend and the villagers from his hometown dead, you are all that he has left. Please, understand that.”

As Rolonia hid, she desperately kept on trying to persuade Fremy.

“Please trust Ad-kun. Ad-kun can accomplish anything if it will help protect you, Fremy-san. So he can definitely kill Tgurneu.”

What a sad child, Fremy thought as she listened to Rolonia’s pleas.

She still hadn’t realized Adlet’s true intentions. She had no idea who he really was.

#

“Goldof, step aside. I have to treat Adlet’s injuries.”

Mora let go of Hans’ hands and came over to Adlet’s side. She then forcibly pushed Goldof to the side and freed Adlet.

Rubbing his hurting stomach, Hans stared at Adlet.

“I just got hit by the hilt of his sword,” Adlet said, brushing aside Mora’s hand and standing to his feet. “I don’t need treatment.”

Then he noticed something on the floor that looked like small fragments. It was what Fremy had taken out of her clothes earlier and then smashed.

He moved over to the pieces and picked them up. It was a wooden whistle that had been broken in two. It seemed like the whistle Adlet used to call Kyoma.

It’s a dog whistle, Adlet’s instincts told him.

And once his mind settled on that he immediately realized exactly what it was for and why she might have been walking around with it all this time.

What the hell Fremy, you really do want to see your dog again, don’t you? Adlet thought.

“What are you doing?” Adlet muttered.

If you break this then how will you call your dog? I just vowed to make it so that you would see your dog again. You’re not letting me keep my promise like this.

I can still fix it, he thought and tucked the whistle fragments into one of the pouches on his waist.

“What should we do now?” Mora asked.

“It’s obvious,” Adlet replied. “We will stop Chamo. Then we’ll stop Fremy from killing herself. What is there other than that? Call Chamo to us with your mountain echoes and tell her that she can’t kill Fremy.”

“…I told her earlier, but Chamo isn’t listening. She shouted for me to stay away.”

“Shit!”

Adlet was about to start running down the labyrinth halls in pursuit of Chamo, when Goldof stepped in front of him.

“…I can’t… let you go.”

Get out of my way, he tried to say. He even thought about kicking Goldof and moving past him, but the next instant Adlet froze. Goosebumps appeared on his skin as if his back had been touched with ice.

“Umeow!”

Hans’ idiotic voice echoed through the hall. He’d picked up the sword he’d thrown and was twirling his weapons and staring right at Adlet. And just that look was enough to stop him from taking even a single step.

He wants to kill me. With his training and experience as a warrior he could sense that, and just Hans’ intent was enough to stop Adlet in his tracks. Even Mora, Goldof, and Dozzu could feel it too.

Earlier Hans had touched his sword to Adlet’s neck as a threat. But now he completely intended on killing him.

“…Hans, what do you plan on doing?”

A cold bead of sweat dripped down Adlet’s cheek. Earlier he had fought with Hans in the Illusion Fog Barrier, but even then he hadn’t felt the same level of fear that he did now.

This is probably Hans’ true self. In the Illusion Fog Barrier he was still holding back.

“Meowhi,” Hans laughed. It seemed like from the bottom of his heart he was truly enjoying the situation. Adlet knew very well what it meant when Hans laughed in that manner.

“…Adlet. I am really happy. I feel like I want to make a slight toast in your honor. Do you know why?”

“Who gives a shit?”

“But you know my bad habits, meow. My nature cannot change. I can’t contain how happy it makes me to fight someone strong.”

“So, what is this?”

“It might be a surprise to you, but I actually recognize your prowess. Verbally I’ve made light of your skills, but secretly I rate you as the most formidable of the Six Flowers. I think you are a greater foe than Chamo, Fremy, and Goldof, meow.”

“Ah, that’s because I’m the World’s strongest,” Adlet replied, but the words had lost any of their usual life and spirit.

“That’s why I’m happy. I’m happy that you are the seventh.”

“…What?”

“Tgurneu is a great guy. There isn’t anyone in the world who has ever given me such a wonderful present. To genuinely fight you to the death, that’s a gift that I cannot resist, meow.”

#

Still holding Fremy, Rolonia hid in the corners of the corridor. Fremy again tried to produce gunpowder in her hand, but she still couldn’t move very well. And even if she tried to escape, her body wouldn’t move.

“Stupid cow! Where are you!? Chamo knows you’re over there!” Chamo’s voice echoed through the labyrinth. “Fremy, you say something too! Chamo is going to kill you! Chamo won’t make you suffer!”

Even though Fremy could hear Chamo’s requests, she couldn’t move her lips to reply.

Then she heard a number of Jyuma getting close to them. Rolonia searched for another hiding spot and moved towards it.

But the instant she turned a corner, the Jyuma spotted Rolonia. Immediately their shouts rocketed throughout the labyrinth and Fremy sensed that the Jyuma in the vicinity were all heading right towards them.

Rolonia started to run, trying to escape while at the same time to driving back the Jyuma that were pursuing her.

But as soon as she saw the figure ahead of them, Rolonia shrieked and came to a stop.

“Ah, I finally found you,” Nashetania said.

Nashetania saw that Rolonia was being chased by the Jyuma and with her single arm she drew her rapier and extended the blade until it ran through one of the Jyuma’s faces.

“This way is lightly guarded. So hurry,” Nashetania said and pointed with her rapier.

For a while Rolonia was confused and speechless, but eventually she noticed that the direction Nashetania was pointing was the only way out.

“What are you…?”

“I came to protect you, Rolonia-san. If somehow Chamo-san comes here then she might do the worst and kill you too.”

“Huh, you don’t plan on killing Fremy-san?” Rolonia asked and Nashetania giggled.

“Of course not. Wouldn’t Adlet-san kill me if I lay a finger on Fremy-san? That’s a bit too scary for me.”

Rolonia breathed a sigh of relief and the two of them continued their escape.

This is bad, Fremy thought.

With both Rolonia and Nashetania working together it would be difficult for even Chamo to kill her.

Her body still wouldn’t move and she had no idea when the paralysis would wear off.

“You believe Ad-kun?”

“There’s no way I believe him. But at the same time I can’t say for sure that he’s lying. That’s still pending.”

As Fremy listened to the two of them she wondered, *Has Nashetania not realized what’s going on? Or has she realized that Adlet is the seventh and is just keeping quiet about it.*

#

“…You’re joking taking that stance and tone with me, right?” Adlet said back, readying his sword. Even if that was a joke, he also understood that Hans wasn’t just trying to trick Adlet into confirming his suspicions.

“It’s not a joke, meow. I’ll say it again. You’re the seventh.”

It couldn’t be helped that Adlet was suspected. Hans had actually witnessed him lie a number of times. There was no way that Hans had completely trusted him in the first place. But there shouldn’t have been any proof that could lead him to declaring that Adlet was the seventh.

“This isn’t like you. Because I lied you can declare that I’m the seventh? I had thought that you were a guy who judged things a bit more carefully. I said it before, but I’m not lying, nor am I the seventh.”

Instead of replying, Hans sneered.

A single bead of sweat dripped down Adlet’s cheek.

“Stop trying to stir up trouble. After this we’ll stop Chamo, make Fremy give up this idea of killing herself, and then we have to defeat Tgurneu. We don’t have any time left.”

“That’s right, Hans.”

Though Mora had been awestruck by Hans’ killing intent, she finally entered the conversation to stop him.

“We can’t for sure decide that he’s lying. And even if he is lying that isn’t proof that he’s the seventh. Adlet might have just lied so that one of our companions wouldn’t die.”

“…Yeah, yeah, meow. You won’t get it if I don’t say it, huh? I will kill him after I’ve convinced you, Mora, meow,” Hans said with a shrug.

“Well, to tell you the truth, I too until just a while ago still thought it might be someone else because you and I had gotten along fairly well, meow. I too am quite good-natured. It’s truly a disqualification for being an assassin.”

Adlet didn’t know if there was any part of Hans that was good-natured.

“Hans-san. I also am suspicious of Adlet-san. However, I think deciding that he is the seventh based off just this single lie is rash,” Dozzu said.

“I feel the same way. Since you lack definitive proof we cannot approve of your actions,” Goldof continued.

“I didn’t necessarily come to this conclusion just because he lied,” Hans replied.

“I’m not lying! I definitely saw it! Don’t kill the girl, it’s a trap. That’s what the message said. That’s what I saw!” Adlet said.

However, Mora wasn’t listening, not to mention Hans or Goldof. Him seeing the words of light had already been recognized as a lie in the eyes of his companions.

"…Honestly speaking, I don't have any definitive proof about the seventh. That being said, meow, the basis for such an accusation has been growing, and that information doesn't need to be proven."

Hans was just aimlessly walking around, but Adlet couldn't lower his sword. Hans didn't have any openings in his defenses, so if Adlet were to relax his guard he would be cut down.

"First of all, before I even say the proof that Adlet is the seventh, I need to talk about my hypothesis."

"For starters, I think that everything Fremy has said up till now is true. Fremy genuinely loathes the Kyoma and the fact that she was betrayed by her family is a fact. There are no lies here."

Adlet had the same opinion.

"But there is something strange. Why did Tgurneu even hurt Fremy and make her detest the Kyoma in the first place? What is so important about that?"

"Bear the fake crest of the Six Flowers and infiltrate the Six Flowers, then continue to behave as their companion until the power of the Black Barren Flower wipes them all out. If that had been the order then that would have been the end of the story. Fremy had pledged her loyalty to Tgurneu, after all. So why didn't he just order her to do that, meow?"

Hans continued his explanation, "There are a number of possibilities. Maybe he feared the power of the Saint of Words forbidding him from lying? That isn't impossible. However, he could have just sent Kyoma into the human world and restrained the Saint of Words and that probably would have been the end of that."

"Or did he think the possibility of seeing through his plan would be lower if Fremy truly was made to hate the Kyoma rather than simply being ordered to pretend to hate them? That also doesn't seem likely, meow. Fremy is not a foolish girl. Her motives wouldn't be seen through so easily."

Hans stretched his hands out wide.

"Making Fremy hate the Kyoma was a dangerous move for Tgurneu. What if Fremy despaired of the world and ended up killing herself? Or instead of thinking about revenge she chose to live quietly in the human world? After all of his planning he would have to start all over. In other words, even though Tgurneu would be risking danger, to him it was important to make Fremy hate him. I can only think of one reason that would explain that."

"It was to make Fremy a genuine Hero of the Six Flowers. If she didn't genuinely detest the Kyoma or seriously consider killing the Majin then she would not be given the crest of the Six Flowers."

So based on that reasoning I am declaring that Fremy isn't the seventh."

"So what?"

"I'm still in the middle of my explanation. Don't be impatient," Hans scolded before continuing. "So if Fremy is not the seventh then that raises another question. For what purpose is Tgurneu using the seventh?

"With Fremy being the Black Barren Flower, just her being nearby would kill us all, and if that's the case then the seventh wouldn't even be necessary in the first place."

"No, much more than not being useful, the existence of the seventh would be harmful for Tgurneu. If Fremy were suspected of being the seventh then she would be killed by us and all of Tgurneu's hard work would go up in smoke, right?"

He's definitely right about that, Adlet thought. He couldn't necessarily agree with what Hans was saying, but at the

same time his words definitely seemed reasonable.

“No, the truth is there were many times when his plans were in danger of amounting to nothing.”

“In the Illusion Fog Barrier Fremy was the first to be suspected of being the seventh. And even after we infiltrated the Wailing Demon Territory, both Chamo and I had continued to doubt her. Why had Tgurneu risked such danger? What benefit would he gain from slipping the seventh into our group?”

“Uhhh,” Adlet muttered.

“Surely, we were confused by the seventh’s existence. We doubted Mora, Goldof, and then Rolonia. We were cautious of each other so we weren’t able to fight to the best of our abilities which sometimes halted our progress. “

“But, meow, that isn’t a benefit worth risking the danger of losing the Black Barren Flower.”

“Putting Mora into a trap was definitely a strategy that wouldn’t have happened if the seventh weren’t among us. However, though Mora is powerful, it’s unthinkable that sacrificing Fremy just to kill her alone would be worth it.”

“And other than the trap of the Black Barren Flower, did Tgurneu intend on making the seventh kill the Six Flowers? That also seems unlikely, meow. There have been many chances to kill us. If they had felt like betraying us they could have done so whenever they liked.”

“Nevertheless, so far the seventh hasn’t killed any of us.”

“…Hans.” Adlet finally understood what Hans was trying to say.

“My further proof is this supposition, meow. Tgurneu just gave one order to the seventh. Get Fremy to meet up with the Six Flowers and continue to protect her. That’s it, meow.”

Hans looked to Adlet.

“Based on this hypothesis, try to think about all the actions Adlet has taken up till now, meow.”

Adlet’s spine went stiff. He was afraid. He was afraid of both the persuasive power of Hans’ words and the conclusion that would derive from that line of thought.

“…In order to…. protect Fremy…. he lied… about the words of light,” Goldof said, and Hans nodded.

“In addition, before that he’d told Rolonia and I to conceal the truth about Fremy, meow. He roped us into committing the same offense, meow.”

It’s true that I lied, Adlet thought. *But that wasn’t because Tgurneu ordered me to. Fremy is important to me, so I lied because I didn’t want to let her die. I’m not thinking of using Fremy to kill the Six Flowers or anything like that.*

“Adlet usually said, ‘don’t suspect our companions,’ meow. As long as no definitive proof comes out then he would not allow anyone to declare a companion the seventh. Now, I think this was also said to protect Fremy.”

Stop screwing around, Adlet thought. He had just been desperately trying to prevent the group from breaking apart.

“Before reaching the Illusion Fog Barrier the princess and I attacked Fremy. At that time, Adlet had been the one who protected her,” Goldof said.

That was after he’d found out that Fremy was a Hero of the Six Flowers, and as a companion he would protect her. *Wasn’t that natural?* Adlet wondered.

“And even when the Illusion Fog Barrier was activated Adlet continued saying that Fremy wasn’t the culprit, though

he didn't have any evidence. She was the Six Flower Killer and the daughter of a Kyoma. So why did Adlet think that she wasn't guilty?"

"Even when he was suspected and she was trying to kill him, Adlet didn't doubt her once. Why? Well, the answer is simple. Adlet had known that Fremy wasn't guilty, so it was necessary to protect her, meow."

Hans continued, "More than anything else, there is one large piece of evidence. I heard it from Fremy in the Illusion Fog Barrier. At first, Fremy hadn't intended on meeting up with us. Adlet held her back. He obstinately followed her around, then stole her things and ran. It was only then that she finally decided to join up with us. I think this is the biggest piece of evidence."

"Stop screwing around!" Adlet shouted.

"I thought there were Six Flowers and that she was one of us! Who knows how dangerous it would have been to let her go off on her own, for both her and us! So what was so strange about asking her to join us?!"

"It wasn't strange," Hans said back to Adlet.

"If you look at each of your actions separately, none of them are strange, excluding the lie about the words of light, meow. You usually appear to be fighting for the victory of the Six Flowers. However, if you look at all of your actions, it's clear that they were all done to help the Black Barren Flower kill us."

"Until I came here, I had even thought of the possibility that the seventh wasn't aware that they were the seventh. But now that doesn't seem likely anymore. You are clearly acting in accordance to Tgurneu's wishes. And you are deceiving us."

"That's…"

"At the very least there is one think that is clearly true. If it weren't for you then Fremy would not have joined up with us. The Black Barren Flower would not have activated. That is enough to declare you are the seventh."

"…That's a stretch. You're adding one and one together and coming up with three or four."

"You were actually quite clever. Quite formidable, Adlet. The entire time we didn't know about the Black Barren Flower we'd been deceived by you. Actually, if the lie about the words of light hadn't been revealed then we might still be subject to your deception."

"Adlet, you are the seventh. You received orders from Tgurneu and have protected Fremy. Was my theory persuasive enough for you?"

Adlet was shaking. However, it wasn't out of fear, but anger.

Do you know how it was to have my entire village destroyed? Do you know how deeply I hate Tgurneu? Do you even understand what hell I've endured in order to be able to kill Tgurneu?

He felt like Hans was trampling all over those thoughts. He was even denying his desire to protect Fremy as being nothing more than a fabrication.

"I've witnessed my home be utterly destroyed. And you think that after that I would serve Tgurneu?"

"The humans that have been manipulated by Tgurneu happily followed his orders," Dozzu said. "It was as if following Tgurneu's orders was the greatest joy. Perhaps Tgurneu's ability to command humans… is considerably powerful."

He had no memory of receiving orders from Tgurneu or anything like that. There was absolutely no way that he

would follow his orders.

“Whether Tgurneu even has the ability to command humans to do his will is uncertain. Adlet may be being manipulated or the very fact that his hometown was destroyed might be a lie.”

“I could never follow Tgurneu’s orders! It was a coincidence that I ran into Fremy! I protected her because it was important! The moment I saw Fremy I wanted to protect her! There is no other reason other than that!”

“Perhaps you would say that, meow… even if you were the seventh,” Hans scoffed.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Previous Page
Next Page

Chapter Three: Part Three

Adlet is the seventh, Fremy thought as Rolonia carried her on her shoulder. She had just become sure a bit earlier. When he had lied about the words of light, she thought the chances were nine out of ten, but it was when he had hit her with a paralysis dart and then made Rolonia rush her away from Chamo that she knew without a doubt that it was true.

However, she had started to doubt him long before those two moments. She'd been suspicious ever since Rolonia appeared. Or was it even before, that when seven heroes had gathered within the Illusion Fog Barrier instead of six? Or, perhaps she had suspected him all the way back when they first met?

As for the paralysis, because her body was tougher than the average person, the effects were already starting to wear off little by little.

Can I talk? she wondered. M*aybe I've recovered enough to produce gunpowder, even though it will still be difficult to control.*

However, Fremy decided to pretend it still hadn't worn off. If they knew that she could move again then Rolonia would probably bind Fremy with her whip to keep her from killing herself. And then she might be kicked in the head and rendered unconscious.

If she recovered to the point where she could move without any difficulty, then Fremy could free herself from Rolonia's shoulder and run to where Chamo's Jyuma were. Then she would be killed and it would all be over.

She had decided to give up on killing Adlet the seventh with her own hands. Eliminating herself, the Black Barren Flower, should take precedence. She would leave Adlet's fate and the task of defeating both Tgurneu and the Majin to the others. Knowing Hans and Chamo, they should definitely be able to succeed.

"This is bad, don't you think?" Nashetania asked as she skewered Jyuma that were rushing towards Rolonia. "Chamo-san is close to knowing our location. If she sends all of her Jyuma at once that would of course be tough for just the two of us."

"It… it's okay. Ad-kun will definitely do something for us."

Fremy had mixed feelings about Rolonia. On the one hand she wanted to help her since she was clearly being deceived. However, no matter what she said, Rolonia probably wouldn't believe her.

Fremy thought back to after she and Adlet first met and he showed her affection. Back then she could understand why he had had that stupid smile on his face, because she had thought he hadn't known the truth about her.

But after that Adlet heard that Fremy was the Six Flower Killer, and on top of that Fremy herself told him that she was the daughter of a Kyoma. Yet despite that, Adlet's attitude towards Fremy didn't change at all.

That was when Fremy was sure that Adlet was trying to use her.

No sane human would show her kindness. And there was no way that a human whose hometown was destroyed by

Kyoma would honestly accept a Kyoma as a companion.

Probably Adlet actually detested her too. He had probably decided to hide those feelings and pretend to wrap her with kindness all so that he could use Fremy.

Doubted by his companions, he took Fremy hostage and ran. And then he tried to use Fremy to stay alive.

He threw empty words of compassion and lied about falling in love all in the attempt to get Fremy to ally with him. But though he insisted that he was the world's strongest, he clung to the others and asked them for help, causing Fremy to view him with disdain and disgust.

However, Fremy ultimately helped him. She protected him when Mora and Goldof were pursuing him. And she desperately treated his wounds as his life hung in the balance after he had collapsed from his injuries.

That was a momentary delusion. Fremy had quickly put an end to that behavior. There was no way that she could trust Adlet, not to mention love him, because even then she had understood that he was just using her. She had known that deep down he hated her.

The next morning Rolonia appeared and only made the mystery even more complicated. And after that the Six Flowers entered into the Wailing Demon Territory and had an all-out fight with Tgurneu.

Adlet even more than before continued to act like he loved Fremy. And oblivious to the feelings Rolonia harbored for him, he continued to send her loving looks.

Surely he's thinking I'm going to betray him, Fremy had thought as she watched his actions. He was probably apprehensive about how she hesitated to fight the Kyoma that had raised her, and how she thought about that she wanted to return to her family home.

Perhaps him whispering that he'd make her happy, or vowing to show the world that he'd protect her, or him acting like he would never doubt her was all done in order to cement her as his ally.

The self-proclaimed World's Strongest. Also known as the cowardly warrior. The man that would say anything in order to win. He was probably someone who would whisper words of love without meaning them and feel no pang of guilt.

That's how Fremy interpreted Adlet's actions. However, even if he got on her nerves or made her angry, she couldn't hate him. She continued to worry about the weak and unreliable guy. And because of those feelings she probably would have remained in the dark about his true intentions if they had never come to the temple.

But now Fremy knew the truth about herself. She knew about the Black Barren Flower, a Saint Instrument which just had to exist to be able to kill all of the Six Flowers. And in addition she now understood why Adlet had tried to protect her.

He had protected her in order to kill the Six Flowers. He had pretended to love her in order to throw Fremy off her guard and because he needed a reason to protect her.

If he was a genuine Hero of the Six Flowers and was fighting in order to defeat the Majin and Tgurneu then he would not have a reason to protect her after all that was revealed. And he definitely wouldn't have lied about the words of light.

However she wasn't angry that she'd been used. She had known from the beginning that there wasn't anyone in the world who would love a monster like her.

The only thing she felt towards Adlet was a pure murderous rage. She couldn't forgive those who allied with

Tgurneu.

The number of Jyuma attacking Rolonia and Nashetania was increasing. The two humans would fight then flee, fight and flee again and again, but bit by bit they were being backed into a corner.

“This might be impossible,” Nashetania said.

The two of them had a chance to escape, but with all of the Jyuma surrounding them it would probably be tough.

“Adlet-san hasn’t come, so do you think we should give up and hand over Fremy-san soon?”

“Th… that’s terrible. Why did you come here?” Rolonia said, flustered.

“I came here to stop the group from breaking up. Nevertheless, I’m not obligated to expose myself to danger. My life is important.”

Fremy couldn’t understand what Nashetania wanted to do. At first she suspected that she was conspiring with Adlet in order to kill the Six Flowers, but that was starting to seem unlikely.

Could it be that she hasn’t realized the seventh’s true identity? Was she that imperceptive?

However, no matter what Nashetania was plotting, what Fremy was going to do didn’t change. She was gradually recovering from the paralysis. When she could move her body again she would watch for an opening in Rolonia’s defenses and lower herself from her shoulder. She would then expose her head to the Jyuma in front of them and they would crush her it in their jaws.

Despite being cut down by Nashetania’s blades or flung back by Rolonia’s whip, the Jyuma just reformed and continued their pursuit. So slowly, both Rolonia and Nashetania started to show signs of exhaustion.

#

Hans was blocking the way into the labyrinth and Goldof was circling behind Adlet. It wasn’t a stretch to think that he’d be attacked anytime now.

Enraged, Adlet took a deep breath and calmed down. It didn’t matter if they suspected him right now. In fact, this wasn’t even the first time that he’d stood against his companions so there was no need to lose his cool.

Protecting Fremy was what was important. Before long the paralysis from the dart he’d hit Fremy with would wear off. By that time he needed to stop Chamo and get Fremy to change her mind.

However, he was in Hans’ sights and Adlet’s legs felt rooted to the ground.

“Hans, this isn’t the best plan. Lower your sword,” Mora said, stepping in front of Adlet. “I understand that Adlet is suspicious. I too have been persuaded of that. However, if Adlet is acting in accordance with Tgurneu’s order then there are a number of points that don’t make any sense.”

“That’s probably true, meow. However, I don’t know any of those points. So I’ve decided to kill Adlet right here.”

“Why?!”

“Intuition.”

Hans’s response put Mora at a loss for words.

“I’ve been an assassin for close to ten years. I can’t even count the amount of people I’ve killed with my own hands. When my life was on the line, this intuition has saved me. If I didn’t believe in my intuition then I wouldn’t be able to

believe in myself at all."

"That intuition is speaking to me. It's saying to let Fremy die. It commands me to kill Adlet. It warns that if I don't then I'll be the one who dies."

Behind him Adlet heard a metallic sound. Goldof was standing in front of the door and he'd probably just readied his spear.

"Goldof, even you? You can't really believe in Hans' intuition!"

"…I'm… unsure. However, I think now… is the time to decide."

Adlet could sense that Goldof was about to kill him.

"But I also feel… Fremy and Adlet will… sooner or later… definitely harm the princess. That feeling will not go away."

This is really bad, spiraled through Adlet's head. *How do I get out of this place? And after that how do I stop Chamo? And more importantly how do I get Fremy to give up trying to kill herself?* Adlet couldn't even guess how to go about solving any of those questions.

However, no matter how terrible the situation was, there was no way that Adlet would lose his resolve.

Adlet and Mora positioned themselves so that they were standing back to back. As they did, Hans and Goldof approached from their front and rear, positioning themselves to attack from both sides.

"Mora, what's going on with the others chasing after Fremy and Rolonia?"

Using her second sight Mora informed Adlet of Rolonia's location and also told him that Nashetania was backing her up.

"Does it seem like they can stop Chamo or convince Fremy?" Adlet asked.

"Are you still thinking about Fremy? You're the one who is under suspicion," Mora asked in a shocked tone.

However, Adlet didn't care about himself. At the moment he wasn't thinking about anything other than protecting Fremy.

"There are… conditions… to the crest of the seventh. It would be kind of… bad… to kill Adlet," Goldof said to Hans.

"I know that. We'll just make him utterly powerless by ripping out his eyes or chopping off both of his hands. Ah, right, Dozzu. You don't interfere, meow. Keep sitting right there."

Though Dozzu looked like he was about to say something, he obediently listened to Hans and sat down.

"Mora, can you convince Fremy to change her mind about killing herself?"

Adlet said to Mora behind him.

"She won't listen to me. In fact, I don't think she'll listen to anyone."

You're going to give up without even trying? Adlet wondered. *So I have no choice but to talk with Fremy face to face after all.* If he could convince her then the two of them could assist Rolonia and all three of them could face Chamo together. If he couldn't convince her then he would be forced to hit her with another paralysis dart, throw her over his shoulder and take her away from the temple.

"Get out of our way, Hans!" Adlet shouted and charged towards Hans.

At the same time Hans leaped, ran up the wall and kicked off the ceiling. He was trying to attack Adlet's blind spot.

Adlet simply couldn't follow Hans' movements. For starters there was an overwhelming difference between their swordfighting abilities. And on top of that, Hans' inhuman fighting style put him at a massive advantage in a confined space like the corridors.

"Adlet!"

It was probably impossible to dodge his attack and blocking it might be difficult too, so Adlet didn't even try to deal with the attacks. He just continued to run straight away without putting up any sort of defense or launching any kind of attack.

"Meow?"

Adlet's actions threw Hans off. He didn't seem to predict how Adlet would retaliate, which resulted in his first attack cutting through the air. However, when Hans' hands landed on the ground he used his arms to spring back up and launch his second attack at Adlet's back.

I can't escape, Adlet thought as Hans attacked. *I have to take a chance*.

"I won't let you do this Hans!"

Adlet had thought that Mora would stop Hans' attack and it turned out that he'd been right. Mora rammed her shoulder into Hans and knocked him into the wall.

Meanwhile Adlet continued to run straight down the labyrinth halls. However, there was no way that Goldof would just watch quietly from the sidelines.

"What are you doing, Hans?"

Adlet felt an ominous feeling and jumped up just as Goldof threw a small blade that flew just several centimeters beneath his feet.

"Hans! Follow them!"

"Meow!"

Adlet could hear their voices behind him and he knew that if he stopped they would be able to catch up to him. So he continued to rush down the labyrinth as fast as he could.

#

Seeing that Adlet had dodged his short sword and Hans had been stopped by Mora, Goldof rushed over to assist Hans. Goldof was well aware that he couldn't catch up to Adlet himself. Hans was the only one who could stop him.

After hitting Hans against the wall, Mora grappled with the assassin and eventually pinned him to the ground. However, Goldof struck the side of Mora's stomach with the shaft of his spear.

He had held back with his strike, however it was still sufficient to free Hans.

"Ugh… Adlet!"

As Goldof's spear hit her, Mora pulled something out from within her iron gauntlets. She then threw it towards Adlet. He caught it without even looking back.

"I won't let you go, meow!" Hans shouted and started to chase after Adlet.

Goldof saw Mora take out another object while simultaneously blocking his next attack. Then she threw it as hard as she could at the wall.

Hans tried to run after Adlet, but soon he came to an abrupt stop as if he'd bumped into something, "Umeow!"

Goldof could see that some kind of film was stretched across the labyrinth hall, blocking the corner which Adlet had disappeared around.

"…Mora."

Goldof had seen something like that when she had barricaded them inside the cave at the Bud of Eternity. An instant barrier. When they were at the Bud of Eternity it had been used to trap Tgurneu within the barrier, but conversely this seemed to prevent enemies from entering from the outside.

Hans beat on the barrier with the hilt of his sword, but it had no effect.

"Adlet," Mora called to him using the power of mountain echoes. "If you stab that into the ground it will put up a barrier. Usually if I don't continue to pour energy into the barrier it will dissipate quickly, but on a mountain it is able to absorb power from the mountain itself. So now you should also be able to use it. If you run into Hans again use that and run."

"…Mora, do you think we can't hear you?" Hans asked, dumbfounded.

"You and Goldof's hunches were mistaken. Adlet doesn't seem like an enemy to me."

Mora then passed through the barrier and chased after Adlet. It seemed like somehow she was able to pass through effortlessly, as if the barrier wasn't even there.

"If the two of you are going to trust your hunches then I'm going to trust my own thoughts. I won't let you interfere with Adlet," Mora said over her shoulder and then disappeared from Goldof and Hans' view.

Hans watched her leave with a wry smile. Despite the fact that the situation had been getting worse, his demeanor didn't seem to even have a little bit of panic.

"Oh well, that's fine. If this was easy then it wouldn't be so interesting, meow."

Hans enjoyed fighting. It was a mentality that Goldof couldn't understand.

Though it would probably be difficult to capture them, they had no choice but to pursue. So Goldof started to run in the opposite direction of the path that was blocked off by the barrier.

"Wait. You stay here and watch over Dozzu," Hans said.

Goldof turned around and spotted Dozzu sitting down in front of the Saint of a Flower's chamber.

"He and Nashetania didn't just come here to expose the truth about the Black Barren Flower. They must be planning something. Watch over Dozzu and don't let him move an inch, meow."

It was uncomfortable for him to let Hans go take care of Adlet by himself. However, Dozzu also couldn't be left alone. And as for Nashetania, he honestly didn't know what she was really thinking.

"Leave Adlet to me."

"But so far haven't all you've been doing is failing?"

“Don’t say that!” Hans said in an embarrassed tone and rushed down the labyrinth. However, Goldof wondered if he could really capture Adlet in the vast labyrinth.

Dozzu sighed. “Even though we went through all this trouble to expose Tgurneu’s plans, trouble has still found us.”

Like a bystander Dozzu sat and watched the Six Flowers fight amongst themselves.

#

What should I say to convince Fremy not to kill herself? Adlet wondered as he ran. He realized that he had absolutely no idea what Fremy was really thinking.

Pathetic, Adlet thought. He couldn’t understand even a fraction of the heart of the girl who was so dear to his own, *How can I claim to be the World’s Strongest like this?*

The fact that he was being suspected wasn’t in even a corner of his mind. If he had caused trouble for the others than he would clear that up. However, the dead would never return.

“…Adlet. The path that Fremy and the others went is that way, but if you keep going this way then you’ll probably be captured by Chamo’s Jyuma. Go around.”

“Right, understood,” Adlet replied, complying with Mora’s mountain echoes.

He had to bear Chamo in mind. Even if he could convince Fremy, if Chamo caught him then he might be killed.

Hans and Goldof weren’t his allies and it was unclear just how long Rolonia and Mora would continue to protect Fremy. He had to be resolved to keep on fighting by himself.

But everything that was going on wasn’t quite adding up. The current situation, Hans’ hypothesis, and the fact that Adlet wasn’t the seventh, all of it took shape to form one thing. As Hans had said, there was probably a high chance that the seventh had infiltrated the Flowers in order to protect Fremy. *But if that were true then what was the seventh doing?*

Hans, Chamo, and Goldof were all determined to kill Fremy. Rolonia and Mora were protecting Fremy, but even they were fairly half-hearted about it. Adler doubted they would have done anything if Adlet hadn’t told them to.

Frankly, there wasn’t anyone other than him who was actively trying to protect Fremy.

If the seventh intended on protecting Fremy then they should have obstructed the reading of the sacred writing itself. And it wouldn’t have been that far-fetched to think the seventh would put forward some kind of evidence that proved Fremy wasn’t the Black Barren Flower. However, no one had done anything.

Who is the seventh? And why aren’t they taking action? In their eyes is it alright for Fremy to be killed like this?

Suddenly Adlet felt something wasn’t quite right and came to a stop and checked his surroundings quickly before running off.

“Mora, is this the right path?”

“Wait a second, I’ll check now,” he heard Mora reply with her mountain echoes. “Yes, it isn’t a mistake.”

Adlet dismissed his uneasiness and continued to run and think.

#

However, after a little while Adlet noticed something strange. Even though he had intended on continuing down the

path that Mora had told him about, he couldn't hear the fight between the Jyuma and Rolonia and Nashetania.

"Hey, Mora. Which way should I go from here?" Adlet asked, feeling a bit uneasy.

Mora replied, "From your current location, if you take the long way around the perimeter of the labyrinth then you'll reach Rolonia's location. At the next four-way intersection go right."

Adlet quickly confirmed that Hans and Goldof weren't following him and then he ran. But upon rounding a corner he reached a dead end.

"…Mora, what is this? Answer me."

Mora's mountain echoes didn't reply.

"Mora answer me! Which way?! This way is wrong!"

Her voice answered Adlet's shouts, but it didn't come in the form of mountain echoes, but right behind him.

"It isn't wrong."

Slowly, Mora rounded the corner and appeared in front of Adlet. She was blocking his path so that he wouldn't be able to escape.

"It was my plan from the start to lead you to a dead-end. Adlet…. there is no way that I can let you go to where Rolonia and Nashetania are."

Adlet's legs felt numb. Soon the paralysis on Fremy would wear off and if that happened then Rolonia wouldn't be able to protect her all by herself. And there was no way that he could count on Nashetania to help.

But at the same time, in this labyrinth he wasn't even able to pursue Rolonia and Nashetania without Mora's directions.

"Fremy will die here for us."

Nevertheless there was no way that he was going to give up. He threw down a smoke bomb and tried to slip past Mora's side. However, with her second sight ability it didn't have any effect on her. She tripped him up then grabbed his body and slammed him against the wall of the dead-end.

"Guu!"

Adlet leaned against the wall and as the smoke cleared he could see Mora staring at him with a sad look in her eyes.

"Unlike Hans, I don't think you are the seventh. I'm not saying that in order to deceive you. That's just how I truly feel."

"…Get out the way, Mora."

"…I shall speak my mind," Mora said and then quietly began to explain. "Dozzu said that Tgurneu possesses the ability to control humans. However I don't know if that is true or not. It could simply be a misunderstanding on Dozzu's part, or it might even be a lie."

Although Adlet was listening to what Mora way saying, he was also on the look out for any chance that he could use to rush past Mora.

“However, for some reason I just can’t believe that someone among us is acting according to Tgurneu’s orders. There isn’t any one of us who doesn’t appear to be fighting wholeheartedly. We may have differences of opinions or ways of thinking, but everyone seems to be devoting all their energy to saving the world.

“…”

“All of you are good young people. You, Hans, Fremy, everyone.”

Adlet slowly pushed off the wall and stood.

“I’ve been thinking that Fremy is the seventh and that she came here without knowing both that she was the seventh or the Black Barren Flower. Tgurneu tricked her so that she would come seeking revenge.”

“So what?”

“Tgurneu probably thought that the chance of Fremy being chosen as one of the Heroes of the Six Flowers wasn’t that high. There might be six more suitable individuals that would show up. And it might not have even been possible for a crest of the Six Flowers to be given to a Kyoma in the first place. And if that happened his plot would fail. So in order to definitely make it so that Fremy met up with the Six Flowers, giving her the seventh crest was the most important priority.”

“…Mora… move aside.”

“After that Tgurneu lured me into a trap. If I had died as the seventh then the suspicions towards Fremy would have disappeared and none of you would be trying to kill each other. That was probably all a part of Tgurneu’s plot.”

Adlet didn’t care who the seventh was or anything like that. Nor did he care anymore about what Tgurneu’s plan was. The only thing in his head was his desire to protect Fremy.

It was Adlet’s dream to make Fremy happy and to free her from hatred and solitude. He even felt that if that dream didn’t come true then victory would be meaningless.

“We have won. You protected me. Goldof saved Nashetania and made her ally with us. Dozzu had information about the Temple of Fate. Rolonia found Raina. We have completely destroyed Tgurneu’s plans.”

“But….I…”

“You need to give up on Fremy.”

Give up. Those words echoed through Adlet’s head.

“Even I know that you want to make her happy. However, she is hoping for death. Letting her die might be a kindness.”

He couldn’t permit that kind of kindness.

“It’s dangerous to kill the one who possesses the seventh crest. We should make her transfer her crest to Rolonia or Chamo who are close to her at the moment. There is no proof that one person can possess two crests, but perhaps it’s possible. Granted, I don’t know if it’s possible to hand over the seventh’s crest, but if it’s impossible then we’ll just have to rethink things.”

“What’s going on with Rolonia… and Fremy?”

“They’ll probably give you some bad news… any time now.”

Adlet fell back and once again leaned against the dead-end wall.

There was only a little bit of time left and without Mora's cooperation Adlet's words would never reach Fremy. There was no way to stop Chamo nor a way to support Rolonia.

Is there no way? Is there no longer anything I can do from here? Adlet desperately racked his brains for a solution. Don't despair, he told himself. He recalled Atro telling him to laugh at despair.

"Is there no other option except….letting Fremy die?" Adlet muttered.

But at the same time he thought that something seemed strange. As his body twisted with despair, Adlet thought about the true nature of his uneasiness:

The speech and conduct of Fremy, the Black Barren Flower. The still unknown identity of the seventh. And the fact that he himself was suspected.

The idea that Adlet was the seventh was Hans' hypothesis. And even though he thought part of Hans' theory was on point, Mora's hypothesis was completely off. Tgurneu was not that naive.

The sacred words that described the Black Barren Flower. The abilities of the Black Barren Flower that were still hidden. Dozzu saying that someone was being manipulated by Tgurneu. It was a fact that Adlet wasn't the seventh. Yet Adlet was starting to feel some doubts.

Why isn't the seventh protecting Fremy?

And finally he thought about the Kyoma's actions.

All of those thoughts were connected by only one point, which lead to one conclusion.

I'm an idiot, Adlet thought.

Why haven't I been able to come to this answer until now?

Despite his self-deprecation, he once again thought about Fremy. *No matter what it takes I have to protect Fremy. No matter what kind of result that invites or if I have to sacrifice my own life to do it.*

"Adlet. Give up. Do this for us," Mora said quietly.

Adlet covered his face with both of his hands and started to shake and sob.

"…Adlet. There are no words I could say," Mora said, drawing closer to Adlet. "I'm sorry. I have hurt you. I was able to protect my daughter, but you…"

Mora gently placed her hand on Adlet's shoulder.

But Mora hadn't noticed one thing. Adlet was only pretending to cry.

There wasn't any other way and there wasn't any time to think about what to do after he executed his plan.

However, Adlet was sure that if he were to let Fremy die now then it would be the end of the Six Flowers.

"Huh?" Mora asked, as Adlet grabbed the hand she had placed on his shoulder.

#

Neither Mora nor Adlet had noticed that Dark Specialist Number 30 had been right next to them. Camouflaged to

resemble the stone flooring, it was listening to their conversation only several centimeters behind Mora.

#

At the same time Fremy had realized that she could probably move her body again. Of course she wouldn't be able to move as well as she normally did, but it should be enough to escape from Rolonia's grasp. The number of Jyuma surrounding Nashetania and Rolonia was increasing and their hands were full just trying to defend against the Jyuma's attacks.

So since Fremy had pretended not to be able to move for a while, Rolonia was completely unprepared for when she kneed her in the back of the head.

"Ah!"

Rolonia staggered forward from the blow and Fremy rolled off of her shoulder. Then she dragged her half-functioning legs as fast as she could towards the Jyuma nearby.

"No! Stop it, Fremy-san!!""

Fremy headed right towards the fangs of a water snake Jyuma and presented her head. However, the next instant all of the Jyuma stopped moving. Then they all suddenly reverted to mud and left in a wave.

"…What?" Fremy asked, completely bewildered about what had just happened.

Rolonia threw her body onto Fremy and tried to hold her down.

"Let go of me, you nuisance."

"I can't, Fremy-san. Don't die."

"…Curious. What happened to Chamo-san?" Nashetania said.

Fremy had also been wondering the same thing as she tried to shake Rolonia off of her.

There shouldn't be any reason why Chamo would give up on trying to kill me? Wait, she couldn't have been knocked out by Adlet, could she? Fremy thought, right before she heard Chamo's voice.

"This is terrible! Fremy! Stop trying to die right now!"

Fremy was completely confused. Even now the Black Barren Flower was continuing to absorb their power, so it didn't make sense for her not to die.

"Rolonia! Princess! Stop Fremy! It will be really bad if you let her die now."

Chamo's voice seemed to be getting closer.

Rolonia looked relieved and released Fremy. She was probably thinking that Adlet had struck some sort of deal.

Straddling a slug Jyuma, Chamo came over to their location. She seemed to have a look of both urgency and burning anger.

Chamo jumped off the back of the slug Jyuma and came up to Rolonia. She then punched her in the face hard enough to hurt her wrist.

"You're a giant idiot, Rolonia. You've made an outrageous mess of everything."

“…Wha…what happened?”

“You didn’t hear Obachan’s mountain echoes?”

Chamo grit her teeth in rage. At that point Rolonia finally seemed to notice that something unusual had happened.

“Obachan has been taken hostage…by Adlet.”

“….What are you saying?”

“Adlet captured Obachan. She’s been tied up. And Adlet said that if Chamo and the others kill Fremy, he will cut her throat!”

At first Rolonia gave a small laugh as if to say it’s probably a joke. However, she soon realized it wasn’t and sank down to the floor.

“…Right,” Fremy muttered.

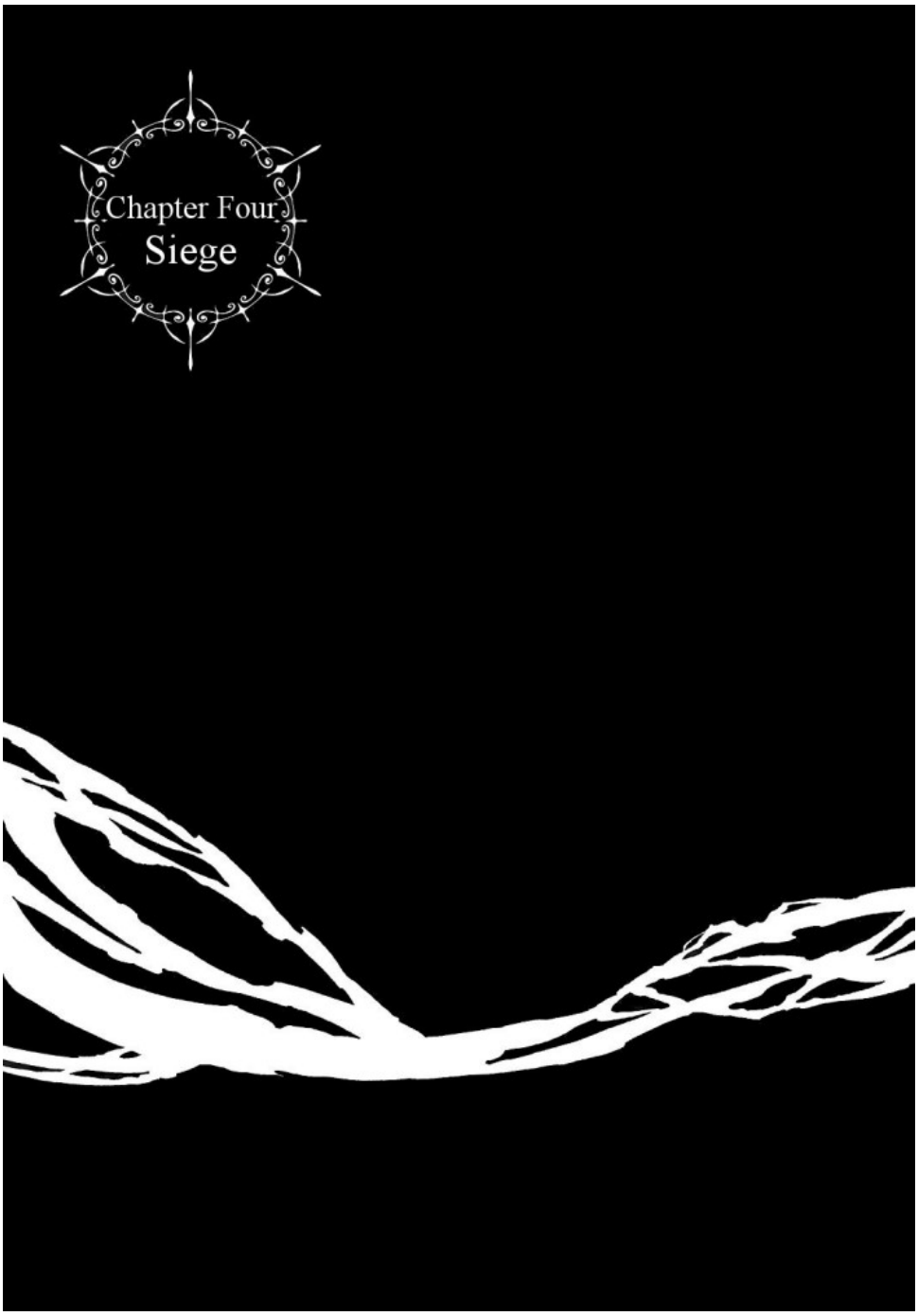
Fremy didn’t feel anger or anything like that. She had known for a long time that Adlet was the seventh and that he would use whatever means necessary to win.

“Let’s go, Rolonia. We have to take down Adlet and save Mora,” Fremy coldly said to Rolonia as she sat on the floor in a daze.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

rokkathetranslation.wordpress.com/volume-5/chapter-four/4-1/



Previous Page
Next Page

Chapter Four: Part One

A battle raged at a corner of the labyrinth, right at a dead of a complex, winding series of paths.

“Guu!”

A single white lizard-like Kyoma attacked Adlet. It ran up a wall, crawled across the ceiling, and lashed at him with its

elongated tail.

Normally the Kyoma wouldn't be any sort of match for Adlet. However, at the moment he couldn't counter its movements. And eventually, without warning, a thorn sticking out the tip of the lizard's tail hit Adlet.

Adlet's left hand was holding an unconscious Mora so he was only able to fight with his right. And on top of the fact that he was carrying the heavy Mora, Adlet also needed to protect both her and himself. However, he couldn't block all of the attacks.

"..chii."

Suddenly, the white lizard lifted its head as if it noticed something. Then it placed some distance between itself and Adlet and camouflaged its body. The flat Kyoma's body started to change to the point where it was difficult to difference between itself and the stone floor.

Adlet threw a dart, but it just struck the stone floor, clattering uselessly onto the ground. It seemed like the white lizard was already gone.

Several seconds after the Kyoma disappeared, Adlet heard footsteps different than those of the Kyoma.

"So that bastard is already here. This is bad."

"…Meow."

Hans was slowly walking down the labyrinth hall. And when he saw Adlet and Mora a smile stretched across his face.

#

On the opposite side of the labyrinth from, Chamo said, "Chamo's pets are talking. They are saying they found Adlet and Obachan a little while ago. Maybe they haven't gotten far. Chamo and the others should hurry."

Fremy moved her body, still slightly affected by the paralysis, and Rolonia picked up her rifle. Then they walked in the direction that Chamo indicated. Rolonia was still withdrawn, shaking her head again and again from side to side. Perhaps she still didn't believe what Chamo was saying.

"You're such a stupid cow!" Chamo shouted, booting her in the face with the sole of her shoe. Rolonia shrieked and held her hand to the area that Chamo had hit.

"What are you doing?! You shouldn't have acted like an idiot and just let Fremy die! Obachan wouldn't have been captured if you had! All of this is your fault, you stupid cow!"

"Bu, but, Adlet said I had to protect….ahh!"

Chamo kicked Rolonia in the face again.

"Shut up!" she barked.

Fremy let out a sigh. "We'll decide who was at fault later."

For a while everyone had been focused solely on Fremy instead of Nashetania, so they hadn't noticed that Nashetania had slowly been lagging behind the group – the distance between them growing by the minute.

"Nashetania?"

By the time they picked up on the fact that Nashetania wasn't right behind them she was already nowhere to be

found. She most likely used the concealment power that she'd used at the Illusion Fog Barrier.

"This is bad! She'll escape!" Fremy shouted and bit her finger.

Receiving pain was one way to break the concealment ability; however, even when Fremy squinted she still couldn't see Nashetania. It wouldn't take that long for her to get away in the complex labyrinth.

"Follow her!" Chamo instructed her Jyuma.

Fremy considered detonating the explosives on Nashetania's legs, but she thought against it. In their current situation they couldn't afford to turn Dozzu into an enemy, and they didn't know what Goldof would do if she harmed Nashetania.

"Leave the princess to Chamo's pets. Right now, Obachan is more important," Chamo said and then started to run. Fremy followed suit, grabbing Rolonia's hand and pulling her along.

"Why Ad-kun? If you did…. something like that…" Rolonia muttered again and again as she held her head with her free hand and reluctantly was pulled down the halls.

#

"Contrary to expectations, you too have limited skills, meow," Hans said as he stared at the unconscious Mora.

Stabbed with a paralysis and sleep dart, Mora was unconscious, completely still like a doll. Adlet was holding her body with his left hand with his other holding a knife against her throat.

Adlet had removed both of Mora's gauntlets and dropped all the tools and weapons she had within her clothes to the ground.

Even Mora, with her superhuman strength and healing abilities as the Saint of Mountains, wouldn't be able to survive having her throat cut out while unconscious. So he thought that having a knife to her throat should have been sufficient to deter Hans.

However, the assassin didn't show even the slightest sign of being bothered by Adlet's threat.

"I saw that strategy at the Illusion Fog Barrier too. However, unlike that time, now you have nowhere to run."

Hans pointed behind Adlet's back with the tip of his sword. Adlet was standing in front of a dead-end in a corner of the labyrinth. The hallway was about four meters wide and Hans was blocking the only way out. Adlet was like a rat in a trap.

"Don't move, Hans. I'll kill Mora."

Hans didn't show any reaction to Adlet's words. He just stood, swaying from side to side and looking for an opening in Adlet's defenses.

Then in an instant, he leaped like a spring.

Adlet kicked the crack in the stone floor with the tip of his toes and stabbed the small spike he'd inserted in his shoe into the crack of the stone floor. At the same time, a film of light spread out around Adlet with a diameter of about five meters.

"Meow!"

Hans smashed headfirst into the light and dropped straight to the ground.

That was dangerous. Adlet's left arm probably would have been chopped off if the barrier had activated any later.

Holding his head, Hans stood to his feet.

"You're being careless," Adlet muttered.

It was clear that Hans didn't care at all about Mora's life. He was just aiming for Adlet.

At that moment Adlet heard Chamo's angry shouts coming from behind Hans.

This isn't good, Adlet thought.

Chamo, Rolonia, and then Fremy rounded the corner and found Adlet. They saw Adlet holding Mora and the barrier separating Hans from Adlet.

Completely pale, Rolonia covered her mouth to stifle her scream. Chamo's lips were quivering in anger. And Fremy was just staring at Adlet, completely quiet. It didn't seem that different from her usual cold expression, but he could see a murderous rage beneath the surface. It was the same expression that she'd directed at Tgurneu.

"…Fremy."

Adlet felt pain shoot through his chest. He had known that if he acted like he was taking a hostage then this kind of situation would occur. However, it hurt to see Fremy look at him as an enemy.

Suddenly Adlet noticed Hans switch directions and rush towards Fremy.

"Stop it, Hans!" Adlet shouted.

However, Hans sliced at Fremy without heeding his plea. It seemed like his sword was going to hit Fremy's neck, but she deflected the strike with her rifle.

"Wait. For now at least."

"Don't you kill Fremy. If you do Mora is a goner!" Adlet shouted.

Hans continued to ignore Adlet and attacked again. This time Fremy took a giant leap back and dodged his cut.

Even though Adlet had taken Mora hostage so that Fremy wouldn't die, it hadn't done a thing to stop that from happening.

I have to stop Hans, Adlet thought, but there was almost nothing that he could do from within the barrier.

"Meow, Fremy, why are you still alive?"

Swinging his sword, Hans approached Fremy.

"I plan on dying; that hasn't changed. But right now Mora is being held hostage."

"Think hard about this Fremy, meow. His objective is to destroy all of us. Do you intend on feeling sorry for just one life and letting us all die? Besides, there is no proof that he would let Mora live even if you didn't die."

"That's not true. Listen to what I'm saying," Adlet said. However, Hans didn't pay him any mind and Fremy just shot Adlet a murderous glance.

"It's pointless to give in to Adlet's demands.You should die here, meow. That'd be the best option."

Adlet pressed the knife he was holding into Mora's neck, but soft enough so that it wouldn't cause a fatal wound. He just wanted to show the others that he was really going to kill Mora.

"…Wait. If I die now you won't be able to help Mora. I can't bear the idea of my companions dying because of me."

"Well…"

"I don't want to let Mora die. No, I don't want to let any of you die. You can't kill me until you help Mora."

Fremy readied her rifle.

"And with that said, if you still plan on killing me right nowt, then I'll resist with everything I've got."

"Chamo thinks the same. Cat-san, Obachan is important. Since Chamo and the others might still be able to help her, Chamo and the others should wait a little longer to kill Fremy."

Hearing both Chamo and Fremy's opposition, Hans sighed.

"You guys are soft, meow. Even with all the terrible things that have happened….Meow, I guess this can't be helped."

Hans looked over to Adlet and smiled.

"That's good, meow, Adlet. Your beloved Fremy will live a little longer."

Don't make fun of me, you bastard, Adlet thought.

"What's the deal with that barrier? How is Adlet using it?" Chamo asked.

"Mora gave it to Adlet. It seems like usually only Mora can use it, but because we're on a mountain this guy can use it too. At least that's what it looks like to me, meow."

"Obachan is really an idiot. Why would she give him that?"

One of Chamo's Jyuma threw its body into the barrier. The film of light just shook, but it didn't let the Jyuma pass through.

"Chamo, do you know a way to break the barrier?"

"…Chamo thinks that Obachan herself can dissolve it. Other than that, pulling up the stake would also dissolve the barrier. However, that seems impossible," Chamo said and looked at the unconscious Mora. "Chamo thinks that in this situation, brute force is the best. If Chamo hits it as hard as Chamo can, it would break the barrier."

Once Chamo spoke, the Jyuma behind Chamo passed by her side and headed towards the film of light.

"Wait, meow. Where did princess-san go? She should be with all of you."

"…The princess ran away."

"Tell me what happened, meow."

Chamo then explained how she stopped her Jyuma from attacking the others. Then after Nashetania found out that Adlet had taken a hostage she ran off somewhere.

So Nashetania was up to something after all, Adlet thought. Perhaps saying that she would protect Rolonia had been nothing more than an excuse to escape from the Six Flowers' watch. *What are you planning?* Adlet thought,

but his mind couldn't come up with anything.

"Meow. Why does something so uncalled-for have to happen right in the middle of people having fun, meow?" Hans grumbled."Chamo, take all of your Jyuma and pursue the princess, meow. It's not necessary for you to be here. Put all of your energy into capturing the princess."

"Ri-right. But, what about Obachan?"

"Don't worry. Leave her to me. Plus, Fremy's here too."

At the back of the group, Rolonia was trembling and quietly watching the others. It didn't seem like she had any fight left in her.

"Is it okay to leave Fremy be?"

"I'll end my life immediately after helping Mora." Fremy replied. "I don't feel even a little scared about dying."

For a while Chamo thought about Fremy's words before replying, "Chamo believes you, Fremy, and you too, Cat-san. Don't let Obachan die."

"I won't let her die," Fremy replied. "I absolutely won't accept any of my companions dying because of me."

Chamo nodded and then straddled her slug Jyuma, and the other Jyuma started to slither away from the group.

"There's no way we can cut ties with Dozzu. So even if it might be a mistake, don't kill her. And send a group of your Jyuma to watch over the perimeter of the Temple. If any enemies come have them inform us immediately, meow."

"Don't worry about the surveillance. The Jyuma are already doing that."

"And we need to let Goldof know about the current situation. Give him these instructions: Don't move. Continue watching Dozzu where you are."

"Understood. Chamo will leave Obachan to you."

With that she turned her slug Jyuma and rode away.

That helped, Adlet thought. He didn't know how long the instant barrier would have held if Chamo threw all of her power at it.

After Chamo left, Hans and Fremy's eyes shifted back to Adlet.

"First of all, we have to destroy the barrier. It seems like it will take some time without Chamo here," Fremy said as she formed a bomb in her hand.

"Adlet is also a very lucky guy, meow. This will cause this to become a bit of a fight. Or did he plan for this to happen as well?"

As Hans spoke he approached the barrier. Then he smashed both of his swords against it. The film of light distorted and warped, but remained undamaged.

"Step aside Hans." Fremy threw her bomb at the barrier.

At the same time that Hans dodged backwards, the bomb's shockwave caused the film of light to shake.

"It isn't a very tough barrier. With time we can break it," Fremy said.

Once again Fremy threw a bomb at the barrier, and as the shockwave shook the light film, a gunshot rung through the air.

Intuitively sensing danger, Adlet dropped to the ground. The bullet pierced through the shield several centimeters above his head. It had lost most of its power, but Adlet would have still been in a world of hurt if it had hit him.

“It seems like if it takes a number of attacks at the same time it won’t be able to protect him.”

Fremy continued her barrage with Adlet throwing out knives to deflect each attack. They slipped through the film of light and hit the bombs that Fremy chucked at the barrier, causing them to tumble across the ground away from the barrier. It seemed like the barrier didn’t have the ability to stop attacks that came from the inside.

However, the barrier was able to stop a direct attack and none of the bullets Fremy fired next penetrated the light.

“If we break down this barrier and save Mora then that will also be the end of you, meow. But, you’re not the type of guy who will wait without lifting a finger.”

“Tell me, meow. What kind of strategy do you have this time? How are you planning on protecting Fremy and killing all of us?”

“You’re wrong. I’m not the seventh,”Adlet said as he readied another throwing knife with his right hand.

“I said to be quiet. Don’t open your mouth until we kill you,” Fremy snapped and threw another bomb.

Right after Adlet knocked it out of the air, Rolonia, trembling on her feet, ran up from the back of the group and positioned herself right between Fremy and the barrier.

“Please stop this! Fremy-san, Ad-kun both of you!”

“You’re in the way, Rolonia.”

Fremy put away her bombs and instead shot at the barrier with her rifle.

“…Ad-kun, please let go of Mora-san! If you keep this up you’ll be killed as if you were the seventh!”

“Sorry, but there is no way I’m going to do that. If I let go of Mora then Fremy will die.”

“Fr-Fremy-san, please stop trying to die! Ad-kun is saying it too! If we defeat Tgurneu then the Black Barren Flower will stop! That’s why you have to stop this!”

“I will say it again. Move aside,” Fremy replied.

Rolonia grabbed her head and shook it from side to side.

Relax, Adlet thought as he watched her. *I don’t plan on killing Mora or anything like that and I won’t let Fremy die either. Nor will I die. If I can explain the situation to Fremy then we can get past this deadlock.*

And the materials he needed to make that happen were already in his grasp.

#

Goldof was tormented by impatience as he watched over Dozzu. Though he didn’t know what Nashetania was thinking, it didn’t seem like she was acting solely to stop the infighting among the Flowers.

Is she planning on running from the temple, assassinating one of the others, or plotting something else I can’t anticipate?

Goldof knew that if Nashetania tried to do anything the Six Flowers didn't approve of they would kill her, so he'd been praying that such a development didn't happen.

When will Fremy die? Could Adlet have possibly let her get away? Goldof had a number of worries, but he didn't receive any news from Mora about if the situation had worsened, or any news at all for that matter.

In contrast to the panicked Goldof, Dozzu was quietly sitting on the ground and seemed to be dozing off.

"Goldof! Big trouble! …Why is there a barrier?"

Chamo sprinted over to Goldof. However, the barrier that Mora had spread across the hallway earlier stopped her halfway.

"Don't worry about the barrier. What happened?"

They talked with the barrier between the two of them, Hearing the situation from Chamo made Goldof dizzy. Mora had been taken hostage and Nashetania had disappeared, and yet the others told him to continue watching over Dozzu right where he was.

"Things have become problematic, but in a way that can be taken as good news since the true identity of the Black Barren Flower and the seventh have mostly been confirmed," Dozzu said, coolheaded as always.

"Dozzu, what do you plan on making the princess do?"

"Well, she is probably thinking about something in her own special way that would help Mora."

"…Do you want to be tortured?" Chamo said with a smile.

Dozzu, however just shrugged.

"Hans-san most likely told you not to do that. You know neither what I am planning nor what Nashetania is trying to do."

Of course Chamo was angry about being lied to so blatantly, but there was nothing they could do against Dozzu. Chamo clucked her tongue and went off to go find Nashetania.

"If Dozzu does anything, beat him to death!"

Goldof nodded and continued his watch of the small Kyoma. Meanwhile Dozzu just continued to sit quietly with a prim, composed look on his face.

#

With Mora unconscious there was no longer anyone who could watch over the entire temple. However, Dark Specialist number 14 didn't lower his camouflage. He didn't know when someone would find him, and without any fighting abilities he'd be finished.

While Chamo was chasing after Fremy, Number 14 continued to lurk in one of the corners of the labyrinth.

There were times when Chamo's Jyuma passed right by him and there were even times when he could hear both Fremy and Nashetania's voices. Nevertheless, like a rock he didn't move an inch.

As for what he should do and who he should attack, Number 14 left those decisions up to Number 30.

Number 14 didn't have the listening capabilities that Number 30 had, and his intelligence was inferior to Number 30's as well.

Number 30, who excelled at maneuverability and gathering information, ran around the inside of the temple collecting information. He decided what they should do and Number 14 enacted his plans. He knew that following Number 30's decision would be the best plan of action.

Number 14 couldn't move without instructions from someone, and though Number 30 could gather information, he didn't have the ability to act on it. The two of them complimented each other's weaknesses. It was a good partnership.

Earlier Number 30 had gone out to scout the situation before coming back and reporting to Number 14. During the report he also informed Number 14 of their new duty: eliminate Fremy.

Fremy was on the verge of killing herself. The only thing standing in the way of that happening was Adlet.

Fremy's death and Adlet's defeat both seemed certain and inevitable. However, Number 30 was still afraid of Adlet. He told Number 14 that there was a chance that Adlet would expose the true identity of the seventh, see through their strategy, and succeed in protecting Fremy.

Number 30 said he had also tried attacking Adlet. However, since his fighting capabilities were low, a single attack from him didn't seem like it would do anything.

Adlet Maia. He was the weakest warrior among the Six Flowers, but he'd heard Tgurneu say that he considered Adlet to be the most dangerous. Even when he was backed into a corner, the Kyoma couldn't afford to be careless around him.

Earlier, Number 14 had unleashed his abilities.

Number 14 specialized in lying in wait, but nothing else. However, what was unique about that ability was that he could make an enemy not be able to notice an attack they'd received. If Fremy and Adlet didn't notice an attack inflicted onto them then it would probably lead to their deaths eventually.

Number 14's ability combined with all the fighting amongst the Flowers was going to make killing Fremy and Adlet all too easy.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

Chapter Four: Part Two

“Listen to me! I’m not the seventh!” Adlet shouted. “Stop attacking me, Fremy! We’re all just falling into the enemy’s trap! If you die here then it might be the end of the Flowers!”

Fremy didn’t pay any attention to Adlet’s words, she just continued to fire bullet after bullet at him.

“Please wait! Fremy-san!”

Rolonia lashed out with her whip and tried to snatch away Fremy’s rifle, but she kicked it away and continued shooting.

“Fine. Try talking, Adlet, meow,” Hans said.

Adlet was shocked. Hans had no reason to listen to him.

“What good could possibly come from listening to him?” Fremy said.

“I can figure out what kind of trap he has in store for us. He is definitely going to try and do something, but I still can’t see his strategy. So I need to prepare for whatever he’s planning,” Hans said and then put away his sword. “Plus, just hitting a barrier over and over again will be a boring fight, meow.”

“…That’s your intention? We don’t have time to satisfy your amusement,“ Fremy said.

However, Hans stayed where he was and crossed his arms. At the same time Rolonia positioned herself in front of Fremy to stop her from attacking Adlet. Seeing both of them, Fremy scowled.

I’ve finally got a chance to talk, Adlet thought in relief. And at the same time he stared at Hans and thought, *your composure is going to prove fatal.*

“Listen to me, Fremy! You also think I’m the seventh, don’t you?”

“Of course.”

“There are probably many reasons to suspect me. But really try to think about it. There is only one thing that points to me being the seventh. The role of the seventh is to protect you and I have continued to protect you all this time. So I’m the seventh. Is that the only thing you are basing your accusations on?”

“When it comes to actual proof, there probably isn’t any, huh?”

Fremy didn’t reply.

“I also think the seventh was given the task of protecting you. There is no way that Tgurneu would let you, the daughter of a Kyoma, meet up with the Flowers completely defenseless.”

“But try to recall, was I really the only person who protected you?”

“…Meow,” Hans shouted.

“When the others were going after you to try and torture you, I wasn’t the one who stopped them. It was Hans, wasn’t it? I clearly remember what he said. *If for argument’s sake Fremy is the seventh, then why is Adlet still alive?* Hans was the one to convince Chamo to back down.”

“So what?”

“It’s not just that. Even if you had been able to stop them from torturing you they would have still suspected you were the seventh. But that suspicion went away because it was directed at me instead. And who was the one that framed me? It wasn’t Nashetania. It was Hans.”

“While I’m at it, to finally clear things up, the one who drove Nashetania into a corner wasn’t me, but Hans. All of it was done to protect you. At first I was suspected and then the real culprit was found, all to prevent you from being suspected.”

Fremy shot a fleeting glance towards Hans. *I’m getting through to her*, Adlet thought, confidently.

“From the very first moment I saw you all the way until now you’ve weighed on my mind. I have wanted to protect you. I ended up effectively performing the role of the seventh. But secretly there had been someone else who had really been trying to protect you.

“…Meow.”

“And I believe that person is Hans.”

“That’s absurd,” Fremy replied.

“If you think back to his behavior when Mora killed him, you’d realize he’d been acting strange. Why did he go to fight Mora alone? Hans, you probably intended on keeping her silent. You wanted to kill her before she could make a terrible confession, didn’t you? Perhaps you didn’t even think you could lose one on one.”

“Everything you’re saying is absurd,” Fremy replied bluntly. “Have you been blind all this time? Hans has been trying to kill me. Only you and Rolonia have been trying to protect me. Hans isn’t the seventh; that was clear a long time ago.”

“Are you saying that Hans, who lied to all of you and framed me, isn’t the seventh?”

“…Are you talking about the words of light?”

Adlet nodded.

“Meow, so it has come to this after all? In order to say that you aren’t the seventh you have no choice but to place the blame onto someone else, meow?”

“Do you intend to keep insisting that Hans is the seventh?” Fremy said. “Is that your idea of proof?”

“Hans-san,” Rolonia said. “Were you really following Ad-kun? What are you planning?”

“Do you think this is like the time I followed you in the forest, Rolonia? No, this time is different,” Hans said.

“You are probably thinking that what I had said was a lie, but I really did see those words of light. I don’t know why you can’t find the place where I saw the words. It may have been hidden with some trick that prevents even Mora from being able to discern where the light had come from. Or Hans might have destroyed the evidence without Mora knowing… I’m thinking it’s the latter.”

“Unfortunately, at the moment there isn’t a way to prove that. And I don’t have any proof that I’m not the seventh.”

Adlet thought back to when he'd been trying to think of a way to protect Fremy from the others killing her. The words of light had been the first idea to come to him. But even if the existence of the words had been a lie, his insistence had come from true concern. If they killed Fremy then they could fall into Tgurneu's trap. That itself was the reality. But now after all this time he couldn't take back his claim about the words of light and admit it had been a lie. He had no other choice but to keep up the lie until the very end.

"You say that you are unable to prove that you really saw the words of light, but I can't even prove whether that is a lie or not. No matter what we say that debate will never end, so the words of light are immaterial. The facts are that I am the Black Barren Flower. Hans is trying to kill me and you are protecting me. I don't have any proof more eloquent than that," Fremy said.

Adlet had known that she would say that. His simple argument about proving the words of light alone wouldn't be enough to convince her. The problem was what he said next. Adlet needed to choose his next words carefully.

"Is the Tgurneu you know someone who would make a crude plan like this?"

"….Crude?" Fremy hesitated.

"Yeah, crude. Hans is clearly a formidable guy. But, do you think that he alone can completely protect you?.. Ah, that's right. You think that I'm the seventh. In that case I'll change my method of questioning. Do you think that I alone can fully protect you?"

"You have so far."

"Effectively yes. But what if I hadn't stopped Goldof and Nashetania when we first ran into them? What if Chamo had gone on a rampage and tried to kill you? What if all the other Flowers didn't believe you? They probably would have easily killed you. Tgurneu would have had to make the seventh protect you by himself, but such a strategy is extremely uncertain."

"….So, what are you saying?"

"Tgurneu had been preparing another strategy. A strategy that could wipe out all the Flowers whether you lived or died."

"What? If you know something then tell us, meow," Hans replied.

Adlet grinned.

"Letting me talk was a failure on your part, Hans. So was sending Chamo away. You probably wish you had just ignored everything I had said and knocked down the barrier. "

Adlet was trying to provoke Hans, but the assassin wasn't falling for it and just stood where he was with a smile on his face.

"His story isn't worth considering," Fremy said. "If there was a plan that stated my death would kill all of the Flowers then there is no way I should still be alive. If Tgurneu had intended to kill me then he had a number of ways to make that happen. All he would have needed to do was lie about being in secret communication with me and then inform all of you about the existence of the Black Barren Flower. I would have been killed for sure."

"However, Tgurneu had you protect me and conceal the existence of the Black Barren Flower."

Naturally Adlet rebuked her claim.

"The real strategy was probably to let you live and drain the powers from the crests. That's why Tgurneu wouldn't

target you and made the seventh protect you. Nevertheless it was important for him to have some insurance just in case you did die."

"…"

"If we didn't notice the existence of the Black Barren Flower the power would have been drained from our crests and all of the Flowers would have been killed. And if we did notice the Black Barren Flower then we would have killed you which would activate his second trap. Tgurneu had a contingency plan up his sleeve in case the first fell through. Tgurneu and the seventh changed their battle tactics. They either did so when we heard about Fremy's true identity from Raina, when you remembered coming to the temple and told all of us, or perhaps when Dozzu heard about the existence of the Temple of Fate."

"…What else?"

"Even after we determined the existence of the Black Barren Flower Fremy continued to live. Tgurneu and the seventh hadn't intended that. As I said, the seventh thought that there was a chance that Tgurneu would lose if I chose to use all of my power to kill him. Even though it was a one-in-a-million chance, he wanted to shut that down before it could happen."

"So the seventh… Hans, got in my way. He urged you to kill yourself in order to stop me. He made you doubt the evidence that I found. And he claimed that I was the seventh to strip me of everyone's trust."

"What proof do you have of this so-called contingency plan?"

"The words of light were more proof than anything else. But there was one more clue. There was that sentence written in sacred writing that said that after you died some kind of function would activate. You were probably the one who had confirmed that translation," Adlet said to Fremy. And then he showed everyone the wound on his left leg.

"And earlier I was attacked by a Kyoma. It was after I took Mora hostage. A Kyoma came and tried to tear Mora and myself apart. That is proof that the Kyoma are trying to interfere with my actions.

"Mora said there were no traces of any enemies…"

"I don't know why Mora didn't detect the Kyoma, nd I highly doubt that Mora is communicating with the enemy."

"Perhaps it was the power that was used to conceal the Black Barren Flower… But if there was a back-up trap then we should have discovered that when we deciphered the sacred writing," Fremy replied.

"Maybe Tgurneu made some kind of mistake so that I could find it. But he was prepared for us finding this temple. Rather, he had the contingency plan explicitly for a situation like this."

Fremy fell quiet.

"Of course, that isn't proof. However, you should be able to understand from my explanation that suicide and declaring me the seventh are both hasty actions. Fremy, hold off on killing yourself. If you decide not to die then I'll immediately lower the barrier and hand Mora over."

Adlet stared into Fremy's eye. His words probably weren't enough to gain back her trust. However, they should be enough to get him out of the current predicament. He was suspicious, but they should now understand that it wasn't absolutely certain that he was the seventh. And so in a way, they should trust what he'd been saying.

Continuing to maintain eye contact with Fremy, Adlet quietly waited for her reply.

#

After hearing his story, Fremy looked around. Hans was silently watching the situation, and Rolonia seemed to be waiting for Fremy to go along with Adlet's persuasion.

"That story wasn't worth listening to," Fremy briefly said over her shoulder.

"Wh- why?" Rolonia shouted.

Fremy turned away from Adlet's desperate expression and looked at Rolonia. The girl completely trusted Adlet, so if Fremy didn't explain she felt she wouldn't be able to convince her.

"The evidence for the second trap is so thin it isn't even worth considering. And the talk of Hans having protected me is simply a stretch."

"But!"

"I…" Fremy said and then went quiet. She looked into Adlet's eyes, the same eyes that had always looked at her with affection, ever since they had first met.

She then looked away to the ground.

Before she came to the Wailing Demon Territory, Fremy didn't care if she died as long as it lead to victory. If she and Tgurneu were both able to trade devastating blows that would be enough. She had thought that if the Flowers fell into a dangerous trap that would wipe them all out she might have to entrust her revenge to the other Flowers and die in order to protect them, and she was okay with that. From the beginning she hadn't planned on living. If her life was something that could be thrown away then she wanted to throw it away herself.

However, Fremy hadn't done that. Even though the Flowers had fallen into danger she hadn't even considered sacrificing herself.

When they entered the Wailing Demon Territory, when they had been chasing Goldof, and when they had encountered Tgurneu. Each one of those times she could have blown herself up, taking the enemy with her. Yet Fremy hadn't done that either, even though she would have done so without hesitation if she had been the same person she'd been when she'd come back to the Wailing Demon Territory with the other Flowers. And now Fremy understood the reason.

"I'm still alive because Adlet has been here," Fremy said.

Fremy had known that Adlet had been lying. She could sense that Adlet's true feelings towards her were most likely hatred.

Nevertheless, Adlet's words had made her happy. Even if they had been lies, when he told her that he wanted to make her happy and that he wanted to protect she felt happy.

Fremy had wanted to be deceived by him as long as possible. Listening to Adlet was the only time she didn't feel like a monster that wasn't loved by anyone. It was the only time that she thought it was okay for her to be alive. Even though she had known everything he'd said had been a lie.

And that was why Fremy had survived up until now. And that is why Fremy hated Adlet. She'd been irritated with Adlet for making her want to live.

"What Hans has done for me has been worthless. Only Adlet has protected me. If Adlet hadn't been here I would have died a long time ago."

"If Hans was the seventh and he was trying to protect her then he probably would have tempted her into wanting to

live. Just like Adlet had. However, Hans hadn't done anything like that. He simply treated me like someone who fought the same enemies as he did and as a potential seventh. His behavior was completely different from Adlet's."

"That's why it's Adlet. I know you are the seventh. You've protected me and kept me alive all this time. It's unthinkable that anyone other than you could be the seventh."

Fremy shot her rifle. The film of light once again shook violently. But even with her rifle it still seemed like it would take some time to break through the barrier.

#

"….What a cruel story," Adlet muttered with a smile as she watching the film of light shake. He had to smile through his despair, just like Atro had taught him.

Until now he had desperately been trying to protect Fremy. He had wanted to relieve her suffering and he had vowed that he would make her happy.

And that was exactly why Fremy didn't believe him. The more he thought about her the more he lost her trust. The more that he said that he loved her, the further her heart drifted away from him. *How cruel is that?*

Nevertheless, he couldn't allow himself to give up.

Adlet looked over to Rolonia who was standing absolutely still in shock.

#

I'm powerless, Rolonia thought as she watched Fremy shoot bullets at the barrier. *There is no way that Adlet is an impostor, and there is no way that I can let Fremy die.* And yet, even though she knew both of those things there wasn't anything that she could do about them.

"Rolonia!" Adlet said, this time facing her. "Go search for proof! Find something that proves I'm telling the truth!"

Adlet's words set Rolonia into a panic. *Where should I search? And what am I even searching for?*

"Wo- words of light?"

Adlet shook his head.

"No, find the Kyoma. They're lurking somewhere within this temple. They revealed themselves and then immediately disappeared right in front of me. They have to be planning something. They're trying to get rid of me and get Fremy to die."

That's impossible, Rolonia thought. She didn't know her way around the labyrinth, and she didn't she would be able to find Kyoma that couldn't even be found with Mora's second sight.

"Find them and figure out what they are trying to do. Find proof that they are trying to kill Fremy. That is the only way to bring the truth to light. If everyone knows that the Kyoma are trying to kill Fremy then that could stop Fremy's suicide. Ask Chamo to help you, and you can also get Dozzu and Goldof to help. You're now the only person here who can do this for me."

Even the dimwitted Rolonia knew that there wasn't any other way; finding proof that would clear up the doubt surrounding Adlet was the only way to stop Fremy and the others.

"Rolonia. It's a trap. Adlet might be trying to kill you too. Stay there," Fremy said.

However, she couldn't just stay where she was, flustered and doing nothing. Rolonia turned her back to the dead-end and started to run.

"I won't let you go," Hans said.

The next instant, Hans, who had been silently watching the situation, moved right in front of Rolonia and thrust his sword in front of her face. Rolonia froze.

"Ha-Hans-san…"

"Adlet. I understand your ulterior motive. You are using her to find proof that indicates you aren't the seventh and that I am. You need proof that we can't kill Fremy."

Within the barrier Adlet clenched his jaw. At the moment there was nothing that he could do to help her. So, Rolonia just trembled in front of Hans' thrust out sword.

"There is no way, meow, that I can silently watch you go find that proof. I can't be that careless."

"…Rolonia. Go. Don't worry about Hans. He is afraid of you going to look for proof! He is just trying to stop you from revealing the truth!" Adlet shouted.

Then one of Fremy's bullets punched through the film of light and grazed Adlet's cheek.

He's going to die if this keeps up. I have to stop Fremy-san and Hans-san.

But Rolonia couldn't move with Hans' sword thrust in her face. If she moved a step or reached for her whip she would be cut down.

Pathetic. Am I even one of the Six Flowers? Rolonia thought as she stayed rooted to the spot.

I have to protect Ad-kun. The moment I saw him lose Raina-san I had vowed to support him. And yet here I am, unable to do anything.

Fremy-san doesn't matter. I just have to protect Ad-kun.

Suddenly Rolonia felt something wasn't quite right. *Did I just feel something strange?* she wondered, but couldn't quite pinpoint what was making her feel uneasy.

Next Page

(NanoDesu) A Translation of the Rokka no Yuusha Light Novel

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Previous Page
Next Page
Chapter Four: Part Three

Adlet was only sure of two things: that the Kyoma were moving, and that they were trying to kill Fremy. However, Rolonia should be able to discern the enemies' movements and make their objectives clear. Adlet believed in her. She wasn't just a timid girl.

However, his plans were being crushed by the second. Adlet's body was shaking with panic. As long as they couldn't find any kind of proof he knew that it would be impossible to persuade Fremy, and there was nothing he could do about Rolonia being immobilized.

Hans. If Adlet didn't do something about him he wouldn't be able to protect Fremy.

Suddenly, a single Jyuma rounded the corner and started heading their way. There was a memo attacked to its forehead.

"A message from Chamo," Hans said and tore the message off without lowering his sword from Rolonia's face.

As he read, Rolonia didn't move an inch, completely unable to see a single hole in his defenses. After reading the memo, Hans crumbled it up and threw it to the ground.

"What happened, Hans?"

"Tgurneu's main force still isn't coming this way. There aren't any problems," Hans replied.

That's good news, but the current situation still hasn't been resolved, Adlet thought right before pain suddenly rushed through his head, forcing his face into a twisted grimace.

Adlet had noticed that his head had been hurting a little for a while. *Is this the Kyoma's attack?* Adlet wondered. *It might be poison or an attack that relies on sound waves or something, and it doesn't seem like one of Hans or Fremy's attacks. So then, is it the Kyoma?* Adlet looked over at their backs.

The Kyoma might be hiding, so I have to look carefully, Adlet thought; however, he couldn't see anything.

Bit by bit the pain in his head was getting worse, but he had no idea what was happening. And as he puzzled over the cause, time kept on ticking.

#

I have to protect Ad-kun, Rolonia continued to think as Hans held his sword to her face. *I have to change this situation. I have to do something. If I can't do anything here then what was the point of me being chosen as one of the Heroes of the Six Flowers?*

#

The headache was gradually getting worse. And whether or not he was just imagining the pain, he didn't think it was because he was exhausted. He was being attacked by someone.

"…Rolonia, Fremy, pay attention. The Kyoma are attacking."

Rolonia looked around the area. However, Fremy didn't listen to Adlet at all and just continued to shoot at the barrier.

"At-attacked?"

"I don't know the source. Poison, sound wave, I can't see anything. But, my head hurts."

"That's a cold, meow. Getting warm and sleeping is the best treatment for that," Hans said with a smile.

Rolonia looked even more flustered.

"Do you all not feel anything? This unknown Kyoma's ability is unusual."

In the past Master Atro had taught him about the abilities of various Kyoma, but he couldn't think of any Kyoma among those that possessed the kind of ability he suspected. *It might be one of those Dark Specialists. Have they at last come to eliminate me? Do they have no choice but to kill me so that I don't protect Fremy? There's no limit to how bad that would make things.*

"Wh-what should I do Ad-kun? Uhh…."

"So now you're pretending like your head is hurting? Umeow, Adlet, what are you up to?"

Rolonia was confused and Hans was laughing.

Stop screwing around, Hans. My head really hurts, Adlet thought. The pain was getting so strong that he was starting to lose feeling in his left hand holding onto Mora.

Then Rolonia spoke as if she'd finally decided something.

"…Hans-san, Fremy-san, please listen to me. I have a proposal. Ad-kun…you listen too."

Fremy stopped firing her rifle and for a moment the smile vanished from Hans' face.

"The highest priorities are helping Mora and my death. We don't have time to listen to your proposal," Fremy said and then moved to once again resume her attack on the barrier.

But the next moment a sharp swoosh bounced off the narrow labyrinth halls. Rolonia had swung her whip and hit Fremy's hand right before it shot her rifle.

"…What are you doing, Rolonia?"

Fremy's hand wasn't injured; Rolonia had purposefully struck her lightly.

"You're too cru-cruel, Fremy-san. The idea that I can't do anything… that I can't think of anything isn't true at all."

Fremy seemed like she was about to say something back, but Hans stopped her. He also removed his sword from in front of Rolonia's face.

"We're listening, meow. You're our important companion, so we'll hear your proposal."

"…I… can't fight you… Ha-Hans-san. And I have absolutely no clue who the seventh is."

Hans quietly placed some distance between himself and Rolonia.

"Rolonia, trust me. He is the seventh," Adlet said, but Rolonia shook her head.

"Even if you say that, I don't know… And as for proof, there's no way that I can find it."

“But…you’re the only one who can.”

Readying her whip for attack, Rolonia directly faced Adlet.

“Ad-kun, release Mora-san.”

Adlet was shocked. *Even you agree with killing Fremy?*

“It’s alright. I’ll never betray you, Ad-kun. Take me hostage instead of Mora-san.”

This time it was Hans and Fremy’s turns to be shocked.

“….What are you saying, Rolonia?”

“Ad-kun, I can’t find the proof you need. However, Mora-san has her second sight. She is far more reliable than me. She can find the Kyoma that is attacking you, Ad-kun. I think that’s the best way,” Rolonia said to Adlet.

She then looked over to Hans and Fremy. “Fremy-san, Hans-san, Tgurneu might be getting close. We need Mora-san’s power. That’s why it’s better if I take her place as Adlet’s hostage.”

“Bu-but,” Adlet tried to say something back. For Adlet the only thing Rolonia’s plan would do is increase the number of his enemies by one. It didn’t seem like Mora would take his side after he’d held her hostage.

“I won’t allow you to refuse,” Rolonia said, cutting him off.

Adlet was stunned speechless. This was the first time he’d ever seen her this angry.

“I can’t bear to watch this anymore. Ad-kun hurting Mora-san and Fremy-san hurting Ad-kun! I’ll become the hostage! So stop hurting each other!”

“You’re being absurd, Rolonia. You’ll just add another hostage. If you and Mora are both killed then we’ll lose the only people who can heal injuries!”

“I don’t know! I can’t hear you!” Rolonia shouted.

Both Fremy and Hans seemed bewildered by her stubbornness.

“Are you serious?”

“I’m not listening to anything you say either, Ad-kun. If you don’t release Mora-san then I’ll really get angry. I think I’ll have to hit you.”

“…Rolonia.”

Persuasion isn’t going to work on her, Adlet concluded. He’d always known there was a strength at her core that she usually hid from others.

Letting go of Mora was certainly a gamble, but he predicted that Mora wouldn’t completely ignore what he’d said like Fremy or Hans, and with her second sight she might be able to find proof that the Kyoma and the seventh were trying to kill Fremy.

Rolonia’s proposal was advantageous for Adlet.

“Ad-kun, if you wish to let someone in then they will be able to enter the barrier. It’s Mora’s barrier, so it should work like that. Let me in, Ad-kun, and release Mora-san.”

“Alright.”

As Rolonia had said, Adlet wished to let her pass through the barrier. He didn’t quite know how to do it, but perhaps just thinking about it would be enough.

Rolonia started to approach and at that moment Adlet felt something was off about Hans’ behavior. *Why isn’t he trying to stop her?* Rolonia’s plan would only work against him.

Hans had noticed something, and while Adlet was thinking about what he was trying to do, Rolonia entered the barrier.

The next instant Rolonia moved her whip and aimed for Adlet’s left hand that held Mora. He just managed to block the attack with his right shoulder.

“Sorry, Ad-kun,” Rolonia said.

Adlet could see the light of sanity fading from her eyes.

“Fremy-san, kill yourself!” Rolonia shouted as she swung her whip at Adlet for another strike.

#

What’s happening with the battle? Dark Specialist Number 14 thought as he lay in a corner of the labyrinth. Without Number 30 he didn’t know anything that was occurring within the temple; he wouldn’t even know if the battle had ended.

He was concealing his body on the floor of one of the labyrinth corridors, beside the exit of the labyrinth right in the middle of a path that led directly to the center of the temple.

About two hours earlier the Six Flowers had run past him, right above his head, and a number of Jyuma had also passed right beside him. However, none of them had even noticed he was there. He was skilled at ambushes and excelled at concealing himself. Even if he started attacking right now, he was confident that absolutely no one would be able to find him.

Could it be that I’ve been entrusted with the fate of Tgurneu’s forces?

He possessed a fearsome power once he activated his ability. On the other hand, the activation had a lot of conditions so its uses were limited; Number 14 needed a lot of prep time in order to use it.

Predicting the movements of the Six Flowers, who tended to appear in unexpected places at unexpected times, was difficult, and so he hadn’t had any chance to ambush them. There had been a high chance that the Six Flowers would go to the area around the Eternal Flower, but Number 14’s abilities couldn’t pass through the Eternal Flower’s barrier.

When the fighting first started, he had been ordered by Tgurneu to ambush the Heroes at a small barn at the edge of the Fainting Mountains. However, it didn’t seem like the Flowers would visit there and the chance that the Heroes would stay at the barn for a long enough time for Number 14 to activate his abilities was low.

I’m probably going to continue to be useless all the way until the end of this war , Number 14 had thought, partly giving up on ever being helpful to Tgurneu’s cause.

Then half a day ago he had received word that the Flowers were heading towards the Fainting Mountains. The location of the temple was conveyed to Number 14 and he was ordered to attack the Flowers within the labyrinth.

After that Number 14 rushed there and hid himself within the temple to wait for their arrival.

Number 14's ability was a kind of hypnotism. He dispersed a unique substance throughout the air that controlled the minds of humans and at the same time he emitted an extremely low-pitched sound wave that not even other Kyoma could detect. Technically, the ability was similar to a concealment ability, but in reality it was far more powerful.

Number 14 was the only one of the Dark Specialists who could control human minds.

He spawned the desire to kill within their minds.

When affected by his ability he could control humans without them even noticing what was happening. The target that Number 14 chose would come to think that wanting to kill couldn't be helped.

Kill Fremy, was the order Number 14 had received from Number 30.

Number 14 knew that Chamo, Hans, Mora, and Goldof were all wishing for Fremy's death, whereas Adlet and Rolonia were trying to protect her.

So he emitted his sound wave and it started to have an effect on both Adlet and Rolonia. It was making them both harbor a desire to kill Fremy.

#

Rolonia saw Adlet's eyes opening wide with shock as she swung her whip.

Ad-kun never imagined that I would trick him , she thought. Even she hadn't thought a time would come when she would lie to him.

Of course, both Hans-san and Fremy-san were probably shocked too. Rolonia couldn't turn around to look at them but if she did she'd probably be staring right into their disbelieving eyes.

"Guu!" Adlet grunted as he blocked her whip with his shoulder. Rolonia felt guilty about hurting Adlet, but she couldn't stop her hands from attacking.

She was aiming for Adlet's left hand, which was holding onto Mora. Inflicting a fatal wound was out of the question and she didn't even want to injure Adlet. Her objective was to free Mora.

Rolonia didn't think even a little that Adlet was the seventh. Even if the world was falling to ruin, she was sure that she would trust Adlet to the very end. However, what he was doing at the moment was wrong.

It was unlikely that killing Fremy-san would trigger a trap. Adlet was mistaken about that.

And even if it was a trap that didn't matter. No matter what kind of trap Tgurneu was setting for them, they would just find a way to overcome it. And knowing Ad-kun, he could definitely do so.

They shouldn't keep Fremy-san alive no matter what. She brought confusion to the Six Flowers. She was influencing Ad-kun into making bad decisions. She was causing them to fight among each other. Surely that was Fremy-san's objective.

If things continue like this Ad-kun will be killed. Then Fremy-san will be killed.But if Fremy-san kills herself or if Hans-san kills Fremy-san that will resolve everything.

"Release Mora-san!"

Rolonia continued to slash at Adlet's left arm.

She didn't have any doubts about her actions. She was just thinking about protecting Adlet, absolutely believing that

if Fremy-san wasn't there that she would be able to protect him.

#

Number 14 knew that the people being controlled couldn't detect that someone had implanted the desire to kill within their minds. The murderous feeling was justified in the minds of the controlled and as a result they didn't have any doubts about it.

To control humans it was first necessary that they inhale the nerve toxin that Number 14 emitted. Spreading the toxin throughout the labyrinth required a minimum of 6 hours, and for the toxin to become effective on a target required about two hours. That process had already finished. The Flowers had unknowingly continued to breathe in the toxin ever since they arrived at the temple.

After that Number 14 would release a particular sound wave which could plant a murderous desire within his target. The frequency needed to control a person differed from each person, but with one look at his target Number 14 was able to understand the needed wavelength.

Controlling the target with the sound wave couldn't happen instantaneously though, and the more targets there were the more time it would take to implant the murderous feeling in their minds.

"Is it possible for you to control all seven people within the labyrinth?" Number 30 had asked him a little earlier.

"It's possible. However, it would take two hours."

"The fighting will be over by then. How many people could you control within several dozen minutes?"

"…Probably two at the most."

Number 30 thought for a moment and then ordered Number 14 to implant the murderous rage within Adlet and Rolonia. Number 14 thought the request was strange. From what he'd heard they were the two least capable among the Flowers. *If I can control people shouldn't it be the strongest people?*

"They are the only two people protecting Fremy. If you control them then Fremy will be killed."

Number 14 understood. He was confident that Number 30's decisions were far more intelligent than his own.

In the past Number 14 had used his ability to destroy several human villages. He first would go into the village and conceal himself, then after several days amplify the murderous rage. He would cause infighting among the villagers and he would make the villagers lose their solidarity and their ability to make rational decisions. Then Tgurneu would use his verbal tricks to manipulate the villagers into serving him.

Number 14 had been the one who destroyed Adlet Maia's hometown. And now Number 14 could finally kill the boy he'd only been able to injure at that time. Thinking about that filled him with satisfaction.

None of the other Dark Specialists had an ability as complex and powerful as Number 14. Even among the Kyoma of the past there hadn't been any with a similar ability, and they probably couldn't acquire such a skill on their own.

Number 14 owed everything to Tgurneu. Over a hundred years ago he received the order from Tgurneu to acquire the ability to manipulate humans, and he was meticulously directed as to how to evolve and how to use his abilities.

Perhaps Tgurneu also possessed a similar ability, but was keeping it a secret from his Kyoma subordinates. That was Number 14's guess. If he didn't have such a skill then there was no way that he would be able to issue orders. Number 14 didn't have a full understanding of Tgurneu's abilities, and he didn't ask. And of course he didn't talk about Tgurneu's abilities with any other Kyoma.

#

Adlet had never imagined that Rolonia would betray him. He had believed that she would most likely follow everything he said until the very end. The thought that he'd been too soft in his evaluation of her hadn't even crossed his mind. There was something off in Rolonia's eyes; something off about her actions.

It's like she's lost the ability to make rational decisions.

"Ad-kun! Don't run!" Rolonia shouted as she relentlessly aimed for his left hand.

Dodging her attacks, Adlet looked over to Fremy and Hans.

Fremy's eye was wide open with disbelief. However, Hans looked like he we going to laugh. Hans has anticipated Rolonia's betrayal, and now he was positioning himself to cut Fremy's neck.

Adlet was sure that if he kept getting attacked as he was and Fremy kept her guard down then Hans will kill her.

Thinking back on it, originally Hans had even tried to sacrifice Mora's life.

Adlet decided to block Rolonia's attacks with his body. Blood sprayed out from his face and arms and she seemed to hesitate.

In that instant Adlet dropped his knives. Then faster than the eye could see he reached into his belt with his right hand and took something out, gripping it tightly.

It was a bomb. And he had pulled the pin of the powerful explosive out about halfway.

"Stop Rolonia! If you attack now Mora will be blown to pieces!"

He was supporting the pulled out pin with the tip of his finger. If Adlet decided to blow himself up it would only take a moment.

"Hans! Wait!" Fremy shouted.

However, convinced of the good opportunity, Hans slashed at Fremy and she just barely dodged his sword.

"…Umeow. Don't dodge, Fremy."

"If I die now then Rolonia's life, not to mention Mora's, will be placed in jeopardy."

At a loss as to how to continue, Rolonia stopped. Cold sweat beaded on Adlet's forehead.

If the attack from Rolonia had gotten worse, there was a chance that he would have dropped the bomb and blown himself up. Not to mention that if he hadn't decided to grab the bomb in time, Fremy would have died.

"Fremy-san, why aren't you dead?"

"….Rolonia, you're in danger."

"That doesn't matter, Fremy-san. Please hurry up and die. Ad-kun can't protect you if you don't."

What is she saying? Adlet wondered. *She really is acting strange.*

Suddenly, the pain in his head that had gotten slightly better intensified again, and this time it hurt so bad that he wanted to scream. At the same time, he heard a voice whisper within the depths of his mind.

Give up. Let Fremy die. Someone was inexplicably whispering to him in his own voice within his mind.

“Wh…What the hell…”

No matter how strong the pain became, there was no way that he could stop fighting. Adlet pulled out the shackle attacked to a chain from one of his pouches. He then attached his left hand to Mora’s right arm so that they couldn’t separate.

“I’ll say it again, Rolonia. Stop your attack and leave the barrier without saying a word,” Adlet said.

Then the voice echoed in his mind once again.

Let Fremy die. Give up.

It was trying to force him to comply, like a strict father that wouldn’t allow Adlet to disobey him.

And that was when Adlet figured it out: this was the Kyoma’s attack. There were Kyoma that could manipulate human minds. *Is this Tgurneu’s attack? Or is there a Kyoma other than Tgurneu that can control people?*

“Ad-kun, why? Why do you care about Fremy-san so much? Why do you have to go this far to protect her?”

“Ah, that’s right!”

Taking advantage of her hesitation, Adlet rammed his shoulder into Rolonia and tried to force her out of the barrier. Since she was scared of his bomb, she couldn’t even try to resist.

“Rolonia, aim for the stake,” Hans said quietly.

Right before she was pushed out of the barrier, Rolonia swung her whip. But Adlet grabbed her right hand, throwing the whip off target as he forced her and the whip handle out of the barrier.

At the same time a high pitched screech rang through the air and the entire whip was flung from the barrier.

But right after that Adlet noticed that there was a large crack in the stake at his feet.

And then, even though no one had attacked it, the barrier of light shook violently and gradually started to fade.

#

Earlier, a little after Mora had been taken hostage, Nashetania was walking down the labyrinth halls by herself. Her gait was calm, not in the slightest like she was being chased by.

She was right near the exit of the labyrinth and the Jyuma were searching for her in the wrong directions.

Nashetania had always excelled in escaping. Even when Chamo, Mora, and Hans all came after her at the same time they couldn’t capture her, so in such a complex labyrinth it wasn’t difficult for her to avoid Chamo’s attacks.

“Hmm, this is a problem. I wonder how they’ll communicate with me.” Nashetania grumbled as she scratched her head with her remaining hand.

“Perhaps I can’t hear them. Or they don’t have any other method to transmit the information. Hey Kyoma-san, I’m here. Would you mind if we cooperated?”

“You don’t need to worry. We hear you,” a voice said at Nashetania’s feet.

A mouth had opened within the stone flooring.

“Heavens! You have the ability to change into the floor? That’s why even Mora-san couldn’t notice you,” Nashetania said with a smile.

“What do you mean by cooperate?” the floor – Dark Specialist number 30 – asked.

“You already have a way of killing the Six Flowers, right? Well, if you need my help then I’ll cooperate. The Six Flowers are our common enemy. If we work together we shouldn’t get hurt.”

After Number 30 considered for a moment he replied, “Aren’t you allied with them?”

“I was. However, that has already served its purpose. All I needed was for them to escort me to this temple. Now, that alliance is just getting in the way.”

The Kyoma still seemed to be thinking about something.

“Instead, would you mind allowing me the opportunity to lend my assistance? There is something that we need to do at this temple. However, with Goldof watching Dozzu we can’t meet our objective, so I think perhaps you should work with us.”

“That’s out of the question. Do you think there’s any way we’d help that vile Kyoma traitor?”

“Is that how you feel?…That’s unfortunate. If that’s the case then I have no other choice than to betray the Six Flowers and kill them at my next opportunity. I shall think of a different way to achieve my objective,” Nashetania said and Number 30 smiled.

“When I return to Goldof and Dozzu I’ll tell them that I tricked you into nonchalantly appearing in front of me so that I could cut you to pieces.”

“….Wa-wait… you’re not lying about betraying the Six Flowers?”

“Of course not.”

“…Let’s cooperate. But, what can you do for us?”

“I shall eliminate the Flower who is interfering with our goals the most. With all the infighting that’s happening right now, it should be simple.”

Number 30’s silence was proof that he still doubted her.

“Who shall I kill? Hans-san? Or Chamo-san?”

“No, you have to kill Fremy. Right now with Adlet taking a hostage, Fremy is delaying killing herself. Kill her for us.”

Nashetania smiled.

“Understood. After that I’ll also kill Adlet-san. I’ve wanted to make him pay for a long time.”

#

The earth rumbled as hundreds of Kyoma marched, and in the center Tgurneu looked up to the starry sky.

“Three more hours,” he muttered.

Next Page